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The Participation Rights of Adolescents:

A strategic approach

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THE PARTICIPATION RIGHTS OF ADOLESCENTS:
A STRATEGIC APPROACH
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PREFACE

UNICEF Programme Division is pleased to present: **The Participation Rights of Adolescents: A Strategic Approach.**

This paper aims to stimulate discussion and serve as a resource for policy makers, programmers, advocates and activists interested in promoting the meaningful participation of young people, at global, country and community levels. It was commissioned by the Adolescent Task Force at UNICEF headquarters, and supported by Save the Children UK. The paper is the result of a series of consultations with organisations and young people working to promote children's rights, and aims to identify practical means of making the meaningful participation of young people a reality.

The principal author of the paper is Mr. Rakesh Rajani. Mr. Rajani is the executive director of HakiElimu, an independent organization that seeks to achieve equity, quality and democracy in education in Tanzania through greater public participation in education governance. He is also a fellow of the Harvard University Center for Population and Development Studies in the United States, and the co-founder and first executive director (1993-1998) of the Kuleana Center for Children's Rights in Mwanza, Tanzania.

The views expressed in the paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the policies of the partner organizations.

Suggestions and comments on this paper are welcome and should be directed to the Senior Advisor Adolescent Development and Participation, Programme Division.

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August 2001

Acknowledgements

Calling the children together, complain to them or scold them, then exact their consent – that is not a meeting. Calling the children together, hold a speech, stir their emotions and then select a few who have to shoulder the duties and responsibilities – that is not a meeting…Noise, chaos, voting to have done with it – that is a parody of a meeting. A meeting should be businesslike, the children's remarks should be listened to attentively and with interest – without deception or emphasis – a decision should be postponed until the moment the educator has worked out a plan. Just as an educator does not know something, is unable to do something or considers it impossible, so children have a right not to know, not to be able or to consider something impossible. You have to work hard to communicate with children…
(Janusz Korczak in de Winter, 1997:vi)

We as young people always yearn for something that we never really get: A feeling of real control of our situation, and of our lives.

(Matlhogonolo Mogapi, in UNICEF, 1997c:78)

Abbreviations

AIDS- Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

CEDAW- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women

CRC- Convention on the Rights of the Child

DHS- Demographic and Health Survey

FLMZ- Family Life Movement of Zambia

HIV-Human Immuno-deficiency Virus

HRW-Human Rights Watch

IPPF-International Planned Parenthood Federation

MYSA-Mathare Youth Sports Association

NGO- Non Government Organization

ODA- Overseas Development Assistance

PMT- Programme of Working Children

PRA- Participatory Research Approach

PRSP- Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

SYFA-Safeguard Youth from AIDS (Uganda)

SYGA- Save Your Generation from AIDS (Ethiopia)

TGNP-Tanzania Gender Networking Programme

UMATI-Tanzania Family Planning Association

UNDAF- United Nations Development Assistance Framework

UNICEF-United Nations Children's Fund

WHO- World Health Organization

YAR- Youth as Resources

A clarification about definitions, scope and audience

Age range: This paper is about the participation of adolescents, defined as young people aged 10-19 years. In order to avoid monotony, different terms such as adolescents, youth and young people are used in the paper. All are meant to refer to people aged 10-19 years, unless otherwise specified.

Terms: The process of writing this paper has provoked considerable debate on the use of terms to refer to people aged 10-19 years. During the review process, several respondents pointed out that many young people do not like the term 'adolescent' (and its equivalent in other languages) for different reasons, including its associated connotation of being immature, reckless and incapable of sound judgement. People and programmes that work with young people clearly need to ensure that the terms used are respectful of and acceptable to that age group. These reviewers recommended that the term " young people" be used instead. But others felt that the term " young people" would be confusing because it usually refers to people in their late teens and twenties, and in some cases up to age 35. They argued that " adolescent" be retained because it is commonly used by international agencies to refer to the second decade of life, and that it was the best term to ensure a clear focus on this age group. In each specific context, they argued, readers could consult with young people to determine preferred terms, but the term 'adolescent' should be used for a general international document such as this paper. This debate has not been resolved. For the purposes of this paper, the term adolescent is retained, with the understanding that this matter will continue to be debated.

Contexts: This paper outlines general principles for adolescent participation; it does not address itself to adolescents in particular cultural contexts or special circumstances. While the general principles are widely valid, they do not adequately cover the range of complex issues that are at play in diverse and special circumstances. A Maasai boy in Kenya, a girl in rural Bangladesh and a street youth in Guatemala may all be 14 years in age, but their situations and opportunities vary widely. Similarly, circumstances of 14-year-olds in a displacement community or orphanage will also be very different. Finally, participation between the sexes and across the 10-19 year range will also vary considerably. All readers therefore, and especially those concerned with young people in special circumstances, will need to assess the relevance of suggestions provided in this paper, and select, adapt and create as necessary. This is especially true for the 'entry points' discussed in section 5. In this sense this paper is not a 'how-to manual', but a set of ideas to stimulate further reflection, and serve as resource in the design of new initiatives.

Audience: This paper is meant for all those interested in supporting the meaningful participation of adolescents including

policy makers, programmers, advocates and activists working at global, country and community levels. It is written primarily for adults, and young people have only contributed to it to a limited degree. There is still a pressing need for materials on participation for adolescents that are written in a manner that is accessible to young people and in which they have had a significant input. At the same time, however, the paper can be more effective if its use involves active, meaningful interaction between adults and adolescents.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This paper aims to stimulate further discussion and serve as a resource for effectively promoting the participation rights of adolescents. It is primarily written for adults – policymakers, programmers, advocates and activists – who are committed to supporting the meaningful and active engagement of people aged 10 to 19 years. The paper is divided into three parts. The first (sections 2-3) provides the theoretical and conceptual basis for effective adolescent participation. The second (sections 4-7) focuses on the programmatic and strategic aspects. The third (annexes) provides a set of tools.

PROBLEM-BASED AS COMPARED TO DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACHES

The underlying conceptual basis for this paper is that a *developmental* approach that emphasizes investing in young people's 'assets' and 'protective factors' is far more effective than focusing on solving their problems or reducing their illnesses. Seeing adolescents as collections of discrete problems leads to fragmented, vertical responses – separate projects on AIDS, drugs, literacy for instance, that fail to see how problems are interrelated and reinforce one another. Problems that are more visible tend to garner more attention and resources, while other more important but less visible areas are neglected. The problem-based approach is antithetical to the crucial lesson that development is the key to enhancing adolescent potentials and achieving positive outcomes. There is now a considerable body of research that shows that problems have common antecedents, and that investing in strengthening a common set of protective factors is more likely to both have a deeper, lasting impact and help provide the basis to address multiple problems at the same time.

The developmental perspective sheds light on the importance of the *context* of adolescent lives. Positive adolescent outcomes cannot be brought about without understanding the nature and impact of the social, cultural and political environment, and relationships and opportunities available to young people. Several recent studies have demonstrated the positive effect of 'connectedness' to school and home on health behaviors (Resnick, et al, 1997), of close and durable relationships, sense of self-worth, being valued in the community, access to support systems, and opportunities to be useful to others (Carnegie, 1995), and positive relationships with adults, safe spaces, a chance to contribute and access to meaningful opportunities (International Youth Foundation/Pittman, 1996). The research lessons can be summarized as follows: *Adolescent well-being can be most effectively achieved by strengthening young people's capabilities, enlarging their access to opportunities, and providing them with safe and supportive environments.*

THE MEANINGS AND VALUE OF PARTICIPATION

Recently there has been considerable interest in child and adolescent participation, largely due to the widespread ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Section 3 draws on the recent literature on child rights and development to present a synthesis of several key aspects of participation.

Participation can mean many different things in different circumstances and contexts. In its most basic sense, adolescent participation can be defined as *adolescents partaking in and influencing processes, decisions and activities*. In the CRC, participation is a

legal right for all adolescents, and an end in itself. Because it is a right, it is an inalienable entitlement, not a matter of goodwill or charity. But it is a right, not an obligation. Therefore participation must always be voluntary, and never coerced.

Participation is central to the developmental approach, for several reasons. Participation itself is development, in that development is 'a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy' (Sen, 1999:3). The goal of development, and the very purpose of things such as economic growth, education and health, is to be free and able to choose and live the sort of life one wants to live. A community can be considered developed to the extent that it ensures that all its people, including adolescents, are in a position to participate and shape a life of dignity. At the same time, participation is also the means to self-development. Adolescents and their communities do not develop by being passive, by simply observing or being told the key truths of development. Through participation, adolescents develop skills, build competencies, form aspirations, gain confidence and attain valuable resources.

Participation varies according to one's evolving capacities, but all children and young people can participate in different ways from the earliest age. Competence is learned through experience, not magically endowed at a certain age. Maturity and growth are an ongoing process, and achieved through participation. This is a virtuous cycle. The more one participates meaningfully, the more experienced, competent and confident one becomes, which in turn enables more effective participation.

Participation makes sense for adolescents if they are able to engage in areas that are meaningful to them. For a 17-year-old, for instance, insisting that they play hopscotch is unlikely to be helpful, as is excluding them from having a say in the running of their school. The determination of the arenas and ways in which young people participate is fundamentally a question of power, in which young people need to play an increasing part. However, adolescent participation does not negate the vital role of adults, or imply that adults give up their share of responsibility. "Respecting views of the child means that they should not be ignored; but it also means that they should not be simply endorsed … a process of dialogue and exchange needs to be encouraged to prepare the child to assume increasing responsibilities and to become active, tolerant and democratic" (Santos Pais, 1999a:4-5).

At the same time, a note of caution is appropriate. Voluntary participation is crucial, but it is not a panacea. It cannot solve everything. Structural concerns such as macroeconomic arrangements, patriarchy, racism and other forms of institutionalized discrimination have an enormous bearing on adolescent development and well-being, and cannot be dealt with simply through participatory processes. The last thing adolescents need is to be burdened with the responsibility for solving many of the world's intractable problems, and forcing them to do so can cause serious harm.

PARTICIPATION SETTINGS AND LEVELS

Adolescents can participate in multiple *geographical settings*, from the personal to the global, and in a range of *institutional settings*, from the household and school to the municipal council and international conference. However, while all settings are likely to have some relevance to adolescents, they do not all have an equal bearing. Participation that is embedded in the major institutions and processes of young person's everyday reality is more likely to have a deeper impact and be more sustainable in the long run. Schools may be the most significant settings for a majority of young people because they spend many hours everyday in these settings, and because their relationships with teachers and fellow students are likely to be particularly regular and influential. However, for out of school youth living on the street this is unlikely to be the case, and juvenile justice and youth serving organizations may be more important.

There is often a temptation to focus adolescent participation activities on 'higher level' settings such as national conferences and on more visible groups of adolescents such as street youth because they appear to be outside the 'norm' (Edwards, 1996). As a result, more local spheres that may exert a much greater influence – such as the household, the village primary school and the informal economy – can often be neglected. The key point here is that the basis for selection of settings and groups needs justification and transparency, and that careful criteria should be used in order to achieve maximum impact, reach the most vulnerable or ensure greatest sustainability, depending on the goals of the programme.

Programmes should take note of the fact that young people often thrive in alternative settings. At times participation can most meaningfully take place in 'unusual' arenas where youth culture flourishes, such as through the use of music. At the same time, it is important not to 'ghettoize' adolescent participation by containing the focus to domestic or alternative settings. The key point is that young people should be enabled to participate in as many and as wide settings as they desire, to the maximum extent of their competence. Participation in wider settings provides one of the

most powerful ways of enlarging young people's capabilities, opportunities and aspirations, and needs to be promoted, particularly for girls and young women whose movement in wider spheres has been historically limited.

Participation can also take place at different *levels*. As with adults, the levels of adolescent participation will vary at different times, from simply being informed to initiating and making key decisions. The problems arise when young people are unnecessarily or arbitrarily prevented from participating at a level that they desire, or if their participation is masked as being at one level when it is really another. Both of these types of limitations undermine adolescent development, generate resentment and erode their sense of self worth.

Roger Hart (1997:40-55) has developed a useful tool, using the metaphor of a ladder (see page 17), to analyze different levels of participation. Significantly, Hart's conception of youth participation is *relational* rather than *individualistic*; it emphasizes the quality and terms of relationships between young people and adults rather than merely separate, autonomous action by youth. This view is consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the developmental framework outlined in this paper.

The discussion above provides the key elements for a framework for effective adolescent participation (see figure 4 on page 18). In this framework the goal of adolescent participation programmes can be stated as follows:

> **To ensure that adolescents have the capabilities, opportunities and supportive environments necessary to participate effectively and meaningfully in as enlarged a space as possible, to the maximum extent of their evolving capacities.**

CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION

Young people and adults who have worked with adolescents know that achieving meaningful participation is difficult. This is especially true in contexts where social relationships tend to be organized in a highly hierarchical manner and young people have little status or voice. People who have tried to promote participation with good intentions have become frustrated, demoralized or

cynical when it hasn't worked well, and are left wondering what might have been forgotten.

Fortunately, several important lessons can be learned from the literature, programme experience and interviews with young people about the necessary *conditions* for promoting effective participation. These include the need to start as early in childhood as possible, strengthening both adolescents' and adults' abilities to foster youth participation, and allowing young people to take on responsibilities, even when these involve a reasonable degree of risk. It is also important to make sufficient time and space available for participation, and to ensure that participation processes are characterized by honesty and transparency. The structure and processes of adolescent participation need to reflect democratic principles, including the view that everyone is of equal value, respect for minority positions, freedom of expression, active, deliberative and safety from recrimination.

EQUITY IN PARTICIPATION

One of the principal tenets of human rights law is that all rights apply equally to all people, without discrimination. But the reality is starkly opposite: in many contexts the capability, opportunity and support provided for participation to different groups or individuals is extremely uneven. Some of the most common bases for discrimination include age, race, sex, class, size, looks, disability, level of education and location (e.g. refugee or war areas). For this reason, it is crucial that efforts to promote adolescent participation ensure the most inclusive level of participation possible and do not themselves reinforce existing disparities.

Ensuring equity in participation requires explicit efforts. These include removing unnecessary barriers that disqualify or limit any young person's participation, and taking active steps to recruit adolescents from groups that have tended to be underrepresented. Once there is adequate diversity, explicit measures need to be taken to ensure there is a level playing field for participation, through attention to the values and rules for interaction, including language(s) used, seating arrangements and facilitation. However, even with all the right procedures in place, participation can be unequal if capabilities and experience vary, especially due to historical disparities in education. Thus programmes need to seriously consider ways in which to invest in developing the capabilities of adolescents, and especially of those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Finally, the question of

representation is crucial, for it is not acceptable (for adults) to simply select adolescents for participation. Young people need to have institutions and mechanisms to elect those who will represent them and speak on their behalf, to provide representatives with their mandate and to hold them accountable for their actions.

A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO EFFECTIVE ADOLESCENT PARTICIPATION

The main argument of this paper is that partners need to avoid *ad hoc* and *project based* initiatives and instead employ carefully considered *strategic* approaches to adolescent participation. Adolescent participation needs to be promoted and supported in existing projects too; but in the long term it is not sufficient to support initiatives that 'do good work' when the same resources could be used in an alternate manner to achieve a larger, more widespread and longer lasting impact. Seven main strategies are emphasized, and can be summarized as follows:

1. **Support situation analyses of adolescent well-being to spur wider understanding, dialogue and action.** These should reflect the developmental approach to adolescent well-being by not only accounting for problems of adolescents, but also mapping out the strengths and opportunities for adults and young people to contribute to adolescent well-being.

2. **Prioritize participation efforts in settings and practices that are experienced by adolescents on a regular, day to day basis.** Most adolescent participation projects involve relatively small numbers of adolescents in activities *outside the regular processes* of their lives, usually for a limited period of time only. Instead, participation efforts need to concentrate on the places in and people with whom adolescents spend much of their time, such as in the home, community, school or workplace, and with family members, peers, teachers and employers.

3. **Mainstream adolescent participation in key institutions and processes.** Presently many adolescent participation activities are held on an ad-hoc basis, where the duration, settings, levels and terms of participation are set at adult discretion. Ad-hoc participation tends to fail to link with and draw from important ongoing processes in adolescents' lives, and limits adequate follow-up and accountability. In contrast, *mainstreamed* participation entails the involvement of young people as *a matter of course,* such that it is a regular feature of the functioning of the institution or process. The quality and nature of participation, including whether young people have opportunities to critique and influence the terms of their involvement, need close attention.

4. **Support the formation and development of youth associations that maximize the space for democratic adolescent participation.** It is difficult for young people to participate in a hostile environment that provides few opportunities for democratic engagement. Youth associations can provide the essential space for adolescents to participate meaningfully. They can also build young people's capabilities and confidence and provide supportive environments for young people to take initiative and seek advice when necessary.

5. **Ensure that economic policies and investments are supportive of child and adolescent well-being.** The effectiveness of adolescent participation programmes will be severely compromised if basic social services and livelihood opportunities are not secured. Quality education and health services, that are the essential foundations on which adolescent participation can be built, require adequate resources to function effectively. A positive set of economic policies and practices may constitute one of the most powerful *supportive environments* for adolescent participation. There is a need to analyze the impact of macroeconomic policies on children, and make a credible case for them to be more conducive to the rights of young people.

6. **Make the case for adolescent participation at national and global levels.** While the scientific and programme evidence in favour of a participatory developmental approach with adolescents is strong, it is not widely understood and shared. There is, therefore, a need to make a compelling case for this perspective and its implications for policy and practice, and build a broad alliance of support. Partnership with key institutions, such as the World Bank and leading youth agencies, and mainstreaming adolescent participation in the UNDAF process, will be critical. To bring the issue of adolescent participation to a broader audience, influential global publications can be dedicated to this theme, for example UNICEF's *State of the World's Children* report.

7. **Stimulate real public dialogue and debate on adolescent participation.**

Adopting and implementing a participatory developmental approach to young people requires several major shifts in the ways in which young people are viewed and programmes are conceptualized. This will take time to take root, and cannot happen through technical input and high level lobbying alone. Partners need to use effective means to engage with the public at all levels, including young people, to create greater understanding and a new 'common sense' of how best to work with adolescents.

Drawing on the lessons learned from the literature and experience, a number of potential interventions are presented under each entry point. The proposed interventions include reference to numerous examples of good practice.[1]

EFFECTIVE ENTRY POINTS FOR ADOLESCENT PARTICIPATION

Adolescent participation can take place in a multitude of settings and ways, but it is not possible to do everything. One option, therefore, is to leave the choice of focus wide open, and encourage each programme to pick and choose from a menu of possibilities. The lack of a strategic approach, however, can mean that impact is reduced, and that activities while worthwhile in themselves may not contribute *effectively* to the overall goal of promoting adolescent participation. Interventions may be especially susceptible to focusing on more visible activities involving small numbers of adolescents, at the expense of 'less exciting' alternatives that may have a larger and more sustainable effect.

The development of clear *criteria* in the choice of entry points can help maximize both impact and flexibility. Key considerations include assessing entry points in terms of access to the largest number of adolescents, greatest equity in participation, greatest long term impact on the *day to day* aspects of adolescent lives, maximal opportunity for adolescent decision making and likelihood of sustainability over the long term. Other important considerations include the comparative strength of each partner, linkages with existing areas of work and availability and priorities of effective partners.

These criteria can form the basis of a tool to aid in the selection of effective entry points in each country. Some entry points will clearly be more effective and require more attention than others. But the exact choice of these will vary across different country programmes. What is essential is

that the weight assigned to different elements of the criteria and the basis of the choice(s) be well justified, transparent and open to scrutiny.

On the basis of the criteria listed above, research evidence and interviews, six important entry points for adolescent participation are developed in this paper. These are schools, health services, community development and environmental care, youth associations, the media, and political processes. Potential interventions that enhance the capability, opportunities and/or supportive environments for adolescent participation and development in each of the six entry points are presented and discussed.

GOALS FOR ADOLESCENT PARTICIPATION

Defining and measuring goals for adolescent participation represent an especially difficult challenge. Because participation is a right, it should be a goal in itself. Goals and indicators need to be set for quality of participation and equity in participation, which can often be extremely difficult to capture. Moreover, the precise relationship between any specific investment in adolescent participation/protective factors and a specific positive outcome is difficult to establish. Moreover, while some participation goals are relatively easy to define and measure (completion of primary education, enrollment in secondary education) many others are not (level of democratic interaction in the school, improved coverage of youth in the media).

Current data collection systems are also not well suited to account for adolescent participation. Information collected is not disaggregated along the adolescent age group, and tends to cover simple quantitative aspects rather than qualitative measures that would better account for levels of participation.

In this context, indicators for adolescent participation will often need to be closest proxies. A careful balance will need to be struck between ensuring that indicators are not too elusive so as to be practically unmeasurable and an over reliance on easily measurable indicators that fail to account for the extent and quality of the participation process. A grid structure of intervention settings (annex 3) can be used to set goals and indicators at different levels, and can be particularly helpful for use in local contexts.

PRACTICAL NEXT STEPS

The paper concludes with ten practical ideas for developing the initial resources and tools necessary for programme development and advocacy. These include a proposal to consider establishing meaningful youth advisory boards for its programmes at country level. The list of references and annexes at the end of this paper provide further practical resources.

2. PROBLEM-BASED AS COMPARED TO DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACHES TO ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING

Adolescents are getting increasing attention – in the news, in community discussions, in the speeches of politicians, in the concerns of religious leaders and on the agendas of development agencies. The reasons for this are many. There is recognition of sheer demographics: more than half the world's population is now aged below 25 years. Over 20% of all people are adolescents between 10-19 years, 85% of whom live in the South, and their numbers are increasing (WHO, 1999:1-2, 138, UNICEF 1997c:1). The widespread ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which defines the child as aged 0-18 years, has contributed to expanding the focus from younger children to include adolescents.

There is also a growing recognition of the threats faced by adolescents around the world, including lack of access to quality education, vulnerability to illness and infections including HIV, and their inability to secure economic livelihoods. In this context, adolescence is seen as providing an important 'window of opportunity' to promote health and development across the human life-span, and to break the cycles of risky sexual practices, the use of tobacco, alcohol and other substances, poor nutrition and violence. The World Health Organization (WHO) argues that the "enormous public health costs of diseases which become manifest in later life as a result of behavior begun in adolescence is a powerful argument for investing in adolescent health," and that this "will result in significant savings in the economic costs of illness and death, including the direct costs of health care" (WHO, 1999:154).

These developments have resulted in a number of programmes to help young people deal with the threats facing them, some of which have been relatively successful. But the experience suggests that in the long-term a 'problem-fixing' approach is often not effective. Seeing young people as collections of discrete problems leads to fragmented, vertical responses – separate projects on AIDS, drugs, and literacy for instance, that fail to see how different problems are interrelated and reinforce one another. Problems that are more visible often garner disproportionately more attention and resources, at the expense of other more important but less visible aspects that go neglected. Most importantly, the problem-focused approach misses the opportunity to promote the development of positive attributes and skills. Pittman (1996:1) illustrates this well:

> "If I introduced an employer to a young person I worked with by saying, 'Here's Katib. He's not a drug user. He's not in a

gang. He's not a dropout. He's not a teen father. Please hire him', the employer would respond, 'That's great. But what does he know, what can he <u>do</u>?' If we cannot define – and do not give young people ample opportunities to define – what skills, values, attitudes, knowledge, and commitments with as much force as we can define what we do not want, we will fail … problem-free is not fully prepared."

Nevertheless, the problem-based approach dominates youth policy and programmes, despite the evidence. There is now a considerable body of research that shows us that a *developmental* approach to adolescence is both the most effective means to deal with adolescent problems and the most powerful way in which adolescent growth and well-being can be assured. A major review of over 100 articles concludes that adolescent problem behaviors are inter-related and have "similar antecedents" (Dryfoos, 1990). Focusing on these common antecedents rather than problems directly is more likely to have a deeper, lasting impact and help address multiple problems at the same time. While large, long term research studies of adolescents in the South are less available, a review of the health of young people in developing countries also concurs that programmes with adolescents should focus on the underlying antecedents of adolescent behavior (UNICEF and WHO, 1995:49).

When given the opportunity, many young people, at international conferences and in their daily lives, echo these points. For example, when asked what is the most important investment in adolescence, Sakia Amin, a young woman from Chile says, "It's the context surrounding youth. The social and family environment since this will determine to a great extent the way of living and the development of young people" (1999, email).

The developmental perspective sheds light on the importance of the *context* of adolescent lives. Positive adolescent outcomes cannot be brought about without understanding young people's contexts, including their social environment, relationships and available opportunities. A recent longitudinal study of 12,000 adolescents demonstrated the positive effect of "connectedness" to school and home on health behaviors, and showed how the quality of parent-youth relationships and perception of caring teachers were among the most significant "protective factors"

(Resnick, et al, 1997). Another large study found that the quality of relationships that adolescents had with adults and peers was the most influential variable for well-being, even more so than the number or type of programmes (Scales and Leffert, 1999:218). The Carnegie Foundation's extensive research process on adolescence stressed that close, durable relationships, a sense of self-worth and being valued in the community, access to support systems, and opportunities to be useful to others were among the most essential requirements for adolescent flourishing (Carnegie, 1995). Similarly, the International Youth Foundation concludes from its experience of working with young people worldwide that the five critical requisites for well-being are a healthy start, positive relationships with adults, safe spaces, a chance to contribute, and meaningful opportunities (Pittman, 1996).

The Search Institute, drawing upon its research with over 500,000 young people in grades 6 –12 in the United States, has identified 40 "developmental assets" that constitute the "essential building blocks" for adolescent well-being and functioning. The assets emphasize competence and achievement, positive relationships with adults and peers, clear structure, and opportunities for self-definition, creative expression, recreation and meaningful participation in family, school and community life. The Institute has found that the more assets young people have, the less likely they are to practice risky behaviors including using alcohol, tobacco or illicit substances, be involved in violence,

and experience depression/suicide; and the more likely they are to exhibit thriving behaviors, succeed in school, maintain good health, value tolerance and exercise leadership (Scales and Leffert, 1999). The style of interaction in the family matters. Young people in families that practice shared decision-making, where adolescents play a meaningful role, are likely to exhibit positive outcomes (Scales and Leffert, 1999:43)

The numerous reviews and studies above, while varying in emphasis and focus, all concur that the problem-based approach is ineffective and that the focus needs to be on the developmental factors underlying adolescent vulnerability and well-being.[2] The lists of these underlying factors, whether called "antecedents", "protective factors", "essential requirements" or "assets", are remarkably similar. The research lessons can be summarized as follows:

> **Adolescent well-being can be most effectively achieved by strengthening young people's capabilities, enlarging their access to opportunities, and providing them with safe and supportive environments.[3]**

Enough is known about what needs to be done. But there is still a tremendous gap between this knowledge and public understanding, policies and programmes. The challenge now is to bridge this gap.

3. WHY PARTICIPATION

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the most widely ratified treaty in history, enshrines participation as a fundamental right of all children and adolescents (see especially articles 2, 3, 12-15). This places an obligation on ratifying countries to respect, protect and fulfill the right to participation in their laws, policies and practices. A large number of organizations have also committed themselves to promoting adolescent participation. But to many, including programme staff, partners and the public at large, the reasons for taking a new approach are not clear. Why follow the CRC? Why bother with participation? What are the benefits of participation, and what added value does it bring to human development? Others caution that imposing adolescent participation from above simply because the CRC requires it can elicit anger and resistance. Without a compelling understanding of these issues, participation runs the risk of being perceived as yet another 'fad' or 'western imposition'. The following sections attempt to grapple with some of these questions by outlining the value, levels and settings of meaningful adolescent participation.

humans too, with rights, including the right to participate. As Marta Santos Pais (1999a:2) puts it, "children can no longer be perceived as not-yet persons, waiting in the lobby of life to become mature".

2. **Participation is critical to self-development.** Young people cannot develop if they are shackled and unable to meaningfully co-determine the course of their life. Adolescents do not develop by being passive, by simply observing or being told the key truths of development. Through participation young people develop skills, build competencies, form aspirations, gain confidence and attain valuable resources. Maturity and growth are an ongoing process, and achieved through participation. This is a virtuous sequence. The more one participates meaningfully, the more experienced, competent and confident one becomes, which in turn puts one in a position to participate more effectively. This experience contributes to psychological well-being, by giving young people a sense of control

Figure 1: The virtuous sequence of participation and development

3.1 THE VALUE OF PARTICIPATION

1. **Participation is a human right and an end in itself.** Many people agree that every human being has a right to dignity, to respect, to be treated fairly, to have a voice, and to take part in influencing and shaping their world. In other words, to be able to participate is central to being human. It matters for its own sake, regardless of whether it brings other benefits. The CRC affirms that children and young people are full

over their lives. For example, according to Cappelaere and de Winter (1998:3),

"It has been shown that children who grow up in a participatory atmosphere (at home, at school, in institutions) do better at school, reach higher levels of moral development, become more socially involved with less psychological and social problems".

3. **Participation builds effectiveness and sustainability.** It is now widely acknowledged that participation greatly improves the effectiveness and sustainability of projects and processes. When adolescents participate in

creating and managing a project, they not only contribute valuable ideas but also see themselves as the (co-)authors of that project. This sense of ownership in turn engenders a sense of responsibility and desire to act in such a way that will reflect well on the project (UNICEF, 1999a:26). Continued opportunity and support for adolescents to be able to influence and change the project will also help motivate investment and action because they can see how they can make a real difference. A youth club designed and organized by young people is more likely to command a great deal of attention, care and time from young people. School rules compiled in partnership with students are more likely to be relevant, understood and adhered to by them.

4. **Young people can make a valuable contribution to society.** Young people contribute to society in many ways, including by helping in domestic chores, in securing the economic livelihood of families, in taking care of elders, in nurturing and playing with siblings, and in caring for their health and environment. This engagement gives them both a stake and important first hand perspective on a range of life issues that should be considered in decision making. For example, given a voice, young people can provide extremely useful information about hazards in their environment, about conditions at work or school, about risks to the health of themselves and their community. Often adolescents are able to access people and places that adults cannot, and provide ideas that adults may not have considered themselves. For these reasons young people can play a vital role in research, monitoring, evaluation and planning.

5. **Many adolescents throughout the world want to participate,** to feel involved, to count, to have the opportunity to make a difference. This view has been repeatedly asserted by young people in varying contexts, including key international conferences in the last decade (Woollcombe, 1997). But they insist that their role be meaningful. A group of young people in the Dominican Republic interviewed for this paper put it this way:

> "We want an active role, from the perspective of social beings with capacities for interaction in the different scenarios, participating in the processes from the beginning as 'doers' and planners and not just as receptors of final products imposed or objects of these processes. Adolescents have the potential and capacity, and need to be heard and supported (1999: translated interview)."

6. **Participation fosters learning, builds life skills and enables self-protection.** It is now well established that all people, including students, learn best through interaction and participatory learning. Didactic and rote approaches are much less effective. Young people who have 'things just happen to them' without having the opportunity to defend themselves or shape outcomes are more likely to become passive. But adolescents who are encouraged to express their opinions and to be assertive will be more likely to have higher self esteem and move from a position of confidence. They will be better equipped to deal with abusive, threatening or unfair situations because they will be in a better position to seek advice, exit a harmful situation when necessary, or cope creatively when there is no exit (UNICEF, 1999a:3.2). In this sense participation is crucial for protection. In contrast, over-protection can make adolescents feel helpless, dependent and unprepared to negotiate new challenges.

7. **Participation is integral to the democratic ethos.** Democracy demands all citizens take part in establishing the governance and key functions in society. Excluding children and young people would mean robbing half the world's population of the opportunity to exercise their citizenship, and the right to have their interests taken into account. The everyday possibilities for participation also provide adolescents with an informal education in democracy. Opportunities for participation in shared decision making, listening to different points of view, and weighing options and consequences can help build a critical appreciation for the democratic process. This experience can help young people deal with a variety of present and future contexts, from resolving conflicts peacefully in the playground and sharing food equitably in the home to negotiating conditions in the workplace and assessing political options during elections. Such an aptitude is by necessity acquired through the experience of participation; an adolescent cannot experience life in an autocratic manner for 19 years and then suddenly begin to act democratically in adult life.

8. **Young people's participation builds civil society.** Young people's involvement in teams, groups, clubs, committees, NGOs, boards, unions and other types of associations, both with and without adults, can strengthen civil society (Hart, in IYF, 1997:6). This type of involvement can help adolescents learn about how the world works and what to do to make it better, and thereby contribute significantly to community development. Participation that involves a diversity of young people can build a sense of belonging, solidarity, justice and responsibility, caring for people in need, and sensitivity towards

people who are different. This can revitalize a community. The following description from the US based organization Youth as Resources (YAR) is illustrative:

"When youth get involved in YAR projects and boards, they begin to feel a sense of connection, civic responsibility, and self worth as they see their own ideas and actions create positive change in social conditions. Results have been dramatic. In urban public housing neighborhoods, for example, youth are re-igniting hope and an ethic of community self-help. In school and community settings, youth who have never joined organized activities are taking leadership roles alongside experienced youth leaders. And in juvenile correctional settings, young people are taking responsibility, creating solutions, and gaining pride and a sense of connection to adults and their communities (YAR website, www.yar.org/yar4.htm)."

3.2 WHAT IS PARTICIPATION?

In its most basic sense, *adolescent participation can be defined as adolescents partaking in and influencing processes, decisions and activities*. In this sense, participation is fundamentally about the exercise of power. Beyond this elemental definition, however, participation can mean many different things in different contexts (see box). As Merita Irby (IYF, 1997:28) puts it, "the challenge is not to come to a single definition of youth participation, but to create a clear framework for linking and examining different approaches to the issue so that those seeking to increase youth participation can do so thoughtfully".

Meaningful adolescent participation has some basic common features. These are outlined below:

1. **Participation is a right for all, not an option that can be withheld from any adolescent.** Participation needs to therefore be a fundamental basis for working with young people, not a question of showing kindness or expression of charity (UNICEF, 1999a:6). Because it is a right of all adolescents, programmes need to ensure young people are not denied opportunities for participation under any unjustifiable pretext, such as because they are hard to reach or difficult to work with, or because they have failed to conform to adult requirements or expectations.

2. **Participation must be voluntary.** Young people need to be invited and encouraged to participate, not coerced or manipulated. Adults exert an enormous amount of influence on setting the terms of young people's opportunities for participation. They have a responsibility to take a proactive role in creating the environment that promotes these opportunities. However, one needs to be cautious about forced participation which can represent a violation of basic human freedoms. It can also be used to mobilize young people to commit crimes, as is sometimes the case in the use of child soldiers.

3. **Participation is not just one more 'attachment' or ingredient that can be added to the mix.** One cannot just build in a little participation element to what is already being done. Rather, a participatory approach is a different way of seeing young people, and of acting in the world. It is entirely different way of doing development. Legrand puts it in this way,

   "Regarding the promotion of adolescent participation in need of special protection measures: What is key in our intervention is not to provide a bit of education, skills training, etc. but to support and facilitate the

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> **DIFFERENT MEANINGS OF PARTICIPATION**
>
> - Seeking information, forming views, expressing ideas
> - Taking part in activities and processes
> - Playing different roles includes listening, reflecting, researching, speaking
> - Being informed and consulted in decision making
> - Initiating ideas, processes, proposals, projects
> - Analyzing situations and making choices
> - Respecting others and being treated with dignity

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process of social integration of these children, allowing them to find a suitable role and status. In such case, participation is not one additional component of the process … but the key issue. The provision of special services for these children has an impact only when it tackles the issue of their (positive) role within a community or the society at large" (Legrand, email 9.9.99).

4. **Participation varies according to one's evolving capacities,** which is in part correlated to one's age and experience. What is possible and desired by a 10 year old can be very different from that of a 18 year old, and also different for two 14 year olds in two different contexts (Baizerman, in Ennew, 2000). It can be meaningless to ask a 10 year old to analyze a municipal budget, for instance, or to insist that all 18 year olds everywhere do homework every evening. A 14 year old rural Xhosa adolescent is likely to have roles, responsibilities and opportunities for participation that are very different from that of a middle class African American or Scandinavian of the same age.

5. **All children and young people can participate in different ways from the earliest age.** Young people are constantly learning and involving themselves in new areas, and each entry into a new task is a time of risk, as is the case with adults. Competence is learned through experience, not magically endowed at a certain age. In this sense participation is a formative right (Zambrano, et al, undated). The key is to enable the participation of young people of all ages to the maximum extent of their evolving capacities, and to support the taking up of new participation in a manner that balances risk and learning, rather than to set arbitrary limits.

YOUNG PEOPLE ON WHAT IS MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION[4]

"Undoubtedly, participation implies decision making and is viewed as a strategy for human development as it is closely linked to the promotion of leadership (with transforming capacities) at the social level, that empowers adolescents, adolescents groups, communities, provinces and the country to get involved in the processes towards individual and collective development."

- Dominican Youth Group

"Participation is to provide equal opportunities, right to information without discrimination; allow fieldwork with all people; inter-active behavior."

- Priscila Cerda, female, Chile

"Participation is to be present in activities or other things, where my word and my opinion has validity."

- Sakia Amin, female, Chile

"Taking part in all decision-making policy, i.e., involving young people in planning and implementing, monitoring and evaluation."

- FLMZ Peers, Zambia

"I understand young people's participation in programmes as a process that involves young people actively contributing at every level of decision making process on issues that concern them."

- Adeola Olunloyo, female, Nigeria

6. **Participation makes sense for adolescents if they are able to engage in areas that are meaningful to them.** The determination of the arenas and ways in which young people participate is fundamentally a question of power, in which adolescents need to play an increasing part (see section 3.3 below). Young people quickly become bored if they are made to deal with issues that do not matter to them. But simply being present is not enough either, for "visibility does not equal participation or empowerment", and "participation that does not place some power in the hands of young people is no participation at all – it is tokenism and manipulation" (Woollcombe, in Ennew, 2000 and email feedback, 2000). Similarly, participation can be jeopardized if young people are asked for opinions, but then arbitrarily excluded from decision-making (Guerrero, interview).

7. **Resistance can be an important form of participation.** Whether in the give and take of the home, in the refusal to accept punishment at school, or general attitude towards civic engagement in the community, resistance can signal an adolescent's opinion about an issue or feeling about the terms of their involvement. Through resistance young people make sense of the social order and negotiate the rules and framework of their own interactions (Flanagan and Gallay, 1995:37-38). This is true for both individual acts and collective action such as strikes and boycotts. Adults can recognize resistance as a form of communication and respond to it by understanding, dialogue and negotiation; which is usually far better than trying to prevent it through force, persuasion, rewards, bribes or shaming (Ennew, 2000). Even refusing to participate is itself an important form of participation that deserves respect. As Kavita Ratna puts it, "young people's decision not to participate is also a matter of exercising their right" (email communication).

8. **Adolescent participation challenges the status quo but does not negate the vital role** of adults, or imply that adults give up their share of responsibility (WHO, 1999:142-3). It also does not mean that whatever young people say must be wholeheartedly and uncritically endorsed, or that they be left alone to do whatever they want to do. While there is a role for autonomy, in most cases adolescents act in concert with supportive adults. Marta Santos Pais (1999a:4-5) explains it in this way:

> "Respecting views of the child means that they should not be ignored; but it also means that they should not be simply endorsed….a

process of dialogue and exchange needs to be encouraged to prepare the child to assume increasing responsibilities and to become active, tolerant and democratic – combining adults' direction and guidance to the child with the consideration of the child's view in a manner that is consistent with the age and maturity of the child; giving the child an opportunity and ability to understand why a particular option and not another is followed, why a particular decision is taken and not the one the child would have preferred."

Moreover, adults also need to be open to things not going their way. Meaningful participation takes place when adults develop solutions with young people, and not pretend to know all the answers. This can happen when adults are willing to create new forms of collaboration by being genuinely open to changing the goals, content and form of the endeavor and participation within it, and doing so in a fair and transparent manner.

9. **As crucial as it is, participation is not a panacea – it does not solve everything.** Structural aspects such as macroeconomic arrangements, racism, patriarchal arrangements, the distribution of resources and job opportunities, high levels of institutionalized discrimination, the provision of health, education and water services, and the presence of peace and security have an enormous bearing on adolescent development and well-being.[5] These factors have a profound impact on the contexts in which young people live, and can significantly limit the scope of what is possible. In these circumstances, it would be unwise to expect youth participation to solve these larger problems. It is important to guard against the 'individualizing' and transfer down of unreasonable responsibilities in the name of participation and ownership.[6] While adolescents can contribute towards finding solutions, the last thing they need is to be burdened down with the responsibility for many of the world's intractable problems.

3.3 PARTICIPATION SETTINGS AND ROLES

Adolescents can participate in multiple *geographical* settings, from the personal to the global, and in a range of *institutional* settings, from the household and school to the municipal council and international conference (see figure and note on next page). For some, the internet and other 'virtual communities' provide an increasingly important space for communication. Additionally, within these settings, young people can participate through different *roles*. The following table, which is not meant to be exhaustive, lists some of the settings and roles in which adolescents can participate meaningfully.

In order to promote meaningful adolescent participation, the following considerations need to be taken into account:.

1. **While all settings are likely to have some relevance to adolescents, they do not all have an equal bearing.** For instance, schools may be the most significant settings for a majority of young people because they spend many hours everyday in these settings, and because their relationships with teachers and fellow students are likely to particularly regular and influential. However, for out of school youth, juvenile justice and youth serving organizations may be more important. The opportunity to take part in informal support groups and assume roles in the society as soon as possible may be the most important form of participation in refugee settings (UNICEF, undated, point 5.1). A mapping process can help assess the 'everyday reality' and varying significance of different geographical and institutional settings to young people in a particular community.

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTINGS	INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS	ROLES
personal/individual	family	speaking
domestic	schools	learning/teaching
neighborhood	workplaces	listening/hearing
village/town	street	discussing/deliberating
district	physical environment	resisting
national	recreation spaces	care-taking
regional	internet, chat rooms	income generating
global	health/social services	counseling/facilitating
"virtual (computer) communities"	cultural organizations	recreating/playing
	religious institution	culture-making
	youth associations/networks/teams	producing/reproducing
	youth serving agencies	researching/investigating
	other CSOs/NGOs	monitoring/evaluating
	media	reasoning/analyzing
	international agencies	planning/policy-making
	juvenile justice agencies	rule-making
	political parties/parliament	decision-making
	conferences	administering/managing
	special circumstances[1] (e.g. refugee camps, military, orphanages)	representing/advocating
		voting
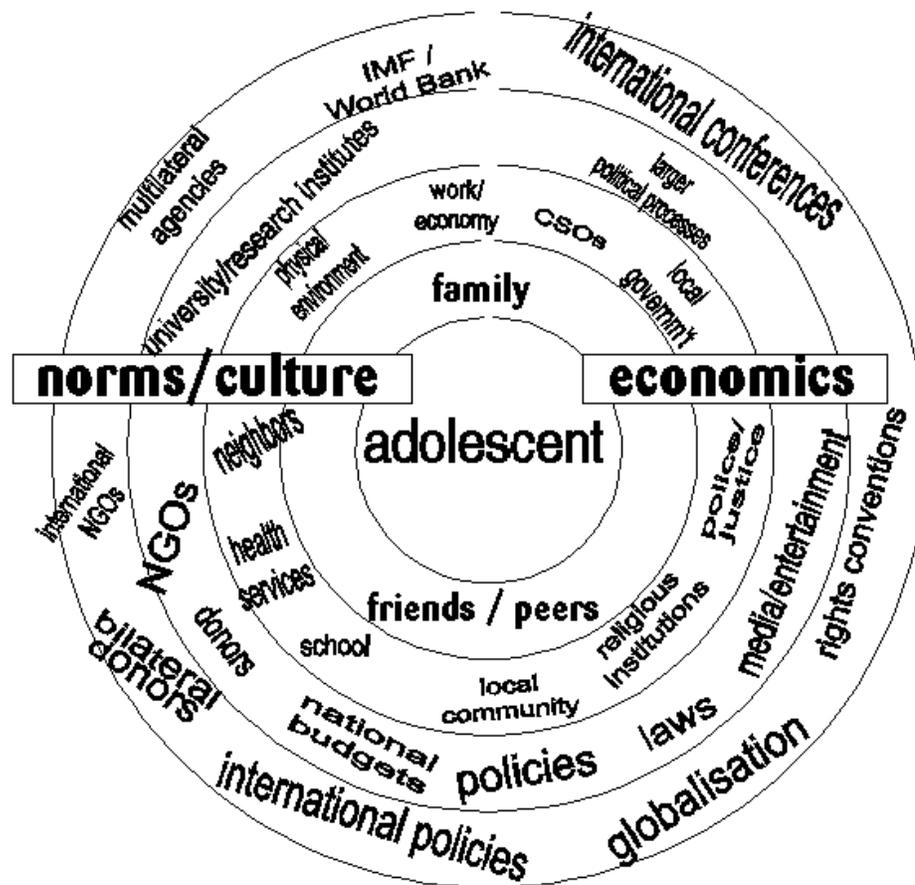
Figure 2: The context of adolescent participation (adapted from Pittman, 1996:9). The barriers and opportunities for adolescent participation will often be determined by the context around the adolescent. The specific context will differ from place to place and among different groups of adolescents. This figure is intended to indicate rough proximity to the adolescent- not all listed in the same layer have exactly the same relationship with adolescents. Programmes therefore need to understand the specific contexts of different adolescents, and the impact of its various layers on the lives of adolescents. Programmes should aim to enable different layers of the context to be as supportive as possible of the development and participation of different adolescents. This does not mean that all programmes need to work at all levels of the context. Rather, it implies that a keen understanding of the significance of different elements of the overall context on different adolescents allows programmes to focus on layers that are likely to be the most effective areas for intervention. Programmes need to recognize that parents have particular obligations to their children and that adolescents themselves can and need to play an important role in deciding the contexts that are most significant to them.

This view has specific implications for the types of participation that programmes ought to focus on. Participation that is embedded in the major institutions and processes of young person's everyday reality is more likely to have a deeper impact and be more sustainable. For example, for a student, the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the student council throughout the school year is likely to have a greater impact than a two-day conference on citizenship in the capital city.

2. **One-time events have limited value if they are not linked to ongoing processes.** Special one-time events, such as surveys or conferences, can be useful opportunities for adolescent participation. Young people who have participated previously are especially appreciative of the opportunity for networking, seeing new perspectives and learning novel strategies. But too often these types of events are manipulative shows, where adolescents are paraded out, made to parrot lines that they did not craft, and where they are ill-prepared to be effective even if they were given the space to speak their mind. The value of such events can be considerably enhanced if they draw from and connect to significant adolescent participation activities in the community. Placing the emphasis on everyday democratic functioning can make special events be "a natural, authentic by-product" of this reality rather than a tokenistic aberration (Hart and Schwab, 1997:6-7). Young people's response to a questionnaire or participation at a conference on evaluation makes more sense if they are organically involved in monitoring and evaluation processes on an ongoing basis. Similarly, effectiveness can be increased if adequate post-conference survey mechanisms and resources are in place to incorporate young people's continued feedback, monitoring and follow-up.

3. **The basis for selection of settings and groups needs justification and transparency.** There is a temptation to focus on adolescent participation in national and international conferences, and on more visible groups of adolescents such as street youth and those involved in hazardous labour practices. As a result, critical local spheres such as the household, the village primary school and the informal economy can be neglected. Common distortions include, for example, large number of participation programmes being organized for street children and virtually none with female domestic workers (even though the population of the latter is considerably larger). Criteria for the selection of settings, groups and issues included in programmes need to be critically examined and made transparent (see section 5 below). Moreover, these criteria need to pay attention to whether organizations for youth are actually accessible and accountable to young people.

4. **Young people often thrive in different types of settings.** It is easier to pay attention to adolescents in formal, recognizable settings such as schools, organized youth groups and agriculture plantations because they tend to be more familiar and accessible. At times, however, participation can most meaningfully take place in 'unusual' settings where youth culture flourishes. In recent years, the internet and other electronic technologies have been particularly important to young people who have access to computers. Music (often of a kind that is not appreciated by parents!) is also a good example of this phenomenon. In many instances, music can be a medium for both intensely emotional and political participation by young people (Mokwena, in Ledward, 2000). Less formal, alternative or underground 'spaces' that adolescents create and value need to be recognized as potentially enormously valuable, provided programming in this area is acceptable to young people and is done in a way that is respectful of their privacy and dignity.

5. **Youth participation should not be limited to marginal settings.** The right to participation in part implies the right to choose the spheres and parameters of participation. It is therefore important not to 'ghettoize' adolescent participation by containing the focus to domestic, limited or alternative settings. The key point is that young people should be enabled to participate in as many and as wide settings as they desire, to the maximum extent of their competence. Participation in *wider* settings provides one of the most powerful ways of enlarging young people's capabilities, opportunities and aspirations, particularly for girls and young women. In Bangladesh, for instance, entry of young women into the workforce and ability to network with each other has had a profound impact on their status, earnings, health and bargaining power in relationships (Mensch, et al, 1998). In South Africa and the Philippines young people with courage and a commitment to social justice have helped topple repressive regimes and usher in democratic governments. Adult support for youth engagement in political change can help ensure their protection, as in the case of the children's movement for peace in Colombia (Cameron, 2000a).

In all cases, however, young people's participation in political aspects should not be romanticized or unreservedly supported. Challenging repressive authorities can carry serious risks, including death. This does not mean adolescents should be forbidden to engage

in all activities that carry serious risks. Rather, potential consequences of actions need to be clearly considered by both adults and young people. There are circumstances where adults may ultimately decide to withdraw support or even disallow young people's participation, but this should be done after discussion and with full explanation rather than arbitrary fiat (see section 3.4 for detailed discussion).

3.4 LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION

As with adults, the levels of adolescent participation in different settings will vary at different times. No one can or wants to be fully and deeply involved in everything and everyplace at the same time, and it is normal to desire a limited or even zero level of participation in some arenas and/or at certain times. An adolescent, for example, may want to initiate and manage his own magazine, but only desire to be consulted in the selection of the school soccer team, informed about the findings of the youth employment survey, and care nothing at all about the protest march this evening. This is fine. The problems arise when young people are unnecessarily prevented from participating at a level that they desire, or if their participation is masked as being at one level when it is really another. In the above example, this could happen if the adolescent was called the magazine editor but had little say in determining its content; if the soccer team was formed without inviting him to be involved; if he had no access to the survey findings; or if he was made to carry a banner at the protest march against his will.

Everyday, in homes, schools, communities and even youth organizations, young people are unable to participate to their desired level and/or fullest capacity. Sometimes, this is due to reasonable factors, such as the need to share responsibilities and privileges, or to avoid serious risks. However, all too often, adults limit or manipulate young people's meaningful participation. The two most common types of limitations are:

- being unnecessarily denied the opportunity to participate at the higher levels when this is desired

- deceptive manipulation where the adolescent is made to appear as participating when in fact they have had little say in or understanding of what is going on.

Both of these types of limitations undermine adolescent development, breed resentment and erode young people's sense of self-worth. Roger Hart has developed a useful tool, using the metaphor of a ladder, to analyze different levels of participation (and manipulation). Significantly, Hart's conception of youth participation is *relational* rather than *individualistic*, in that it emphasizes

the quality and terms of relationships between young people and adults rather than merely separate, autonomous action by youth. This view is consistent with the developmental framework outlined in this paper. The tool can be very useful in a variety of contexts, including research, evaluation and programme planning. It can be especially interesting to use the tool to compare adult and adolescent assessments of the same sets of activities.
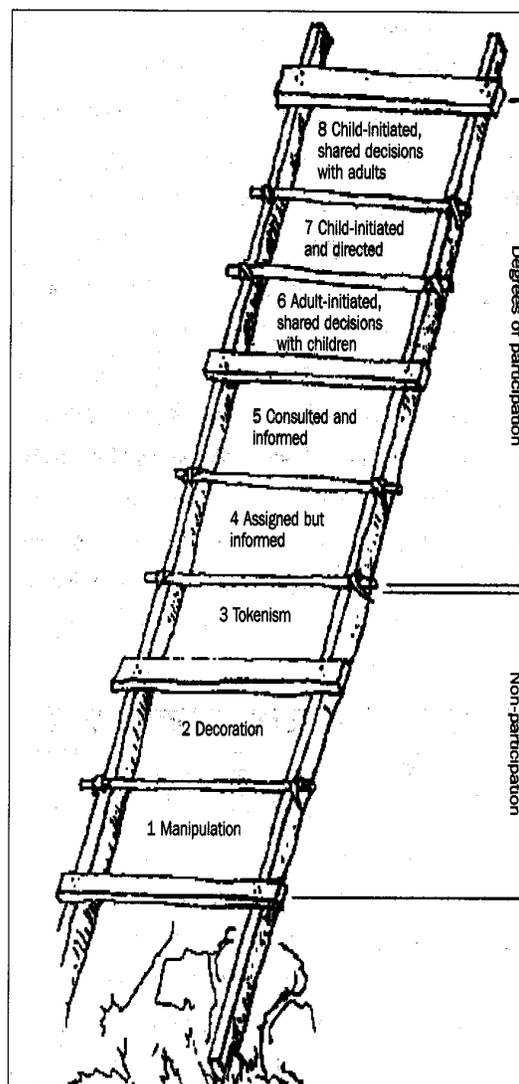
Figure 3: A tool for assessing levels of participation, from Hart, 1997:41 (Hart, 1997:40-55 for an extended description).[8]

3.5 PROMOTING EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION

Young people and adults who have worked with adolescents know that achieving meaningful participation is not easy. This is especially true in contexts where social relationships tend to be organized in a highly hierarchical manner and young people have little status or voice. Others who have tried to promote participation with good intentions have become frustrated, demoralized or cynical when it has not worked well, and are left wondering what might have been forgotten. Based on the established literature, lessons learned, and interviews with young people and staff of several agencies, it can be said that fostering adolescent participation requires three types of interrelated actions as follows:

- build young people's *capabilities*
- increase *opportunities* available to young people
- deepen *supportive environments* around young people

Combined with the discussion in previous sections above on the settings, roles and levels of participation, a basic framework for promoting meaningful participation can be diagrammatically represented as follows:

Figure 4:

The goal of adolescent participation programmes is to ensure that young people aged 10-19 years have the capabilities, opportunities and supportive environments necessary to participate effectively and meaningfully in as enlarged a *space* as possible (along the four axes shown), to the maximum extent of their evolving capacities. (For elaboration of each of the axes see table at beginning of section 3.3 and figure 2.) Participation along these axes should not be arbitrarily denied to adolescents, but it should also always be voluntary and not coerced.
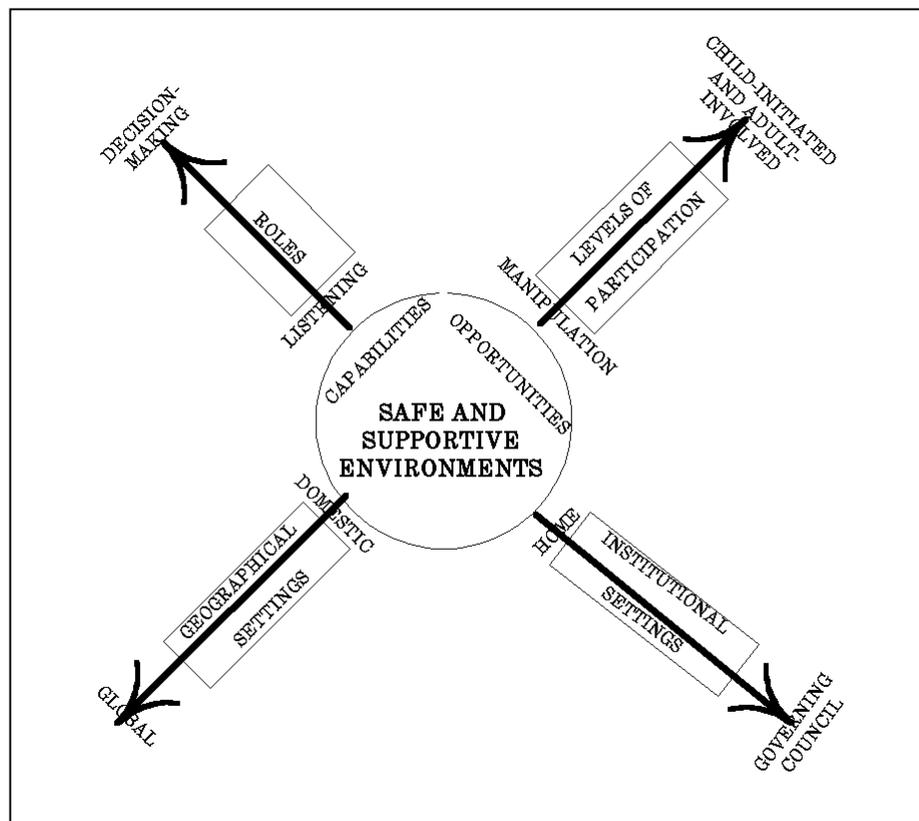
The framework above outlines the basic approach to promoting effective adolescent participation in this paper. Still, many policy makers and programme staff have frequently expressed the need to be informed of practical ideas on 'how to do it'. The following ideas can serve as the essential 'building block' considerations to develop a process of effective participation of young people:[9]

1. **Start early.** Adolescents do not gain the capability to participate effectively overnight. Patterns set in early childhood can have a deep impact on functioning in later life. The participatory approach should therefore be promoted starting in early childhood. The home and school are particularly important, because younger children spend so much of their time there, and because a healthy start and basic education skills provide the necessary foundation for participation.

2. **Ensure that all adolescents are in a position to participate.** Just like with adults, discrimination among young people can be painfully cruel and lead to acute inequities in participation. Depending on the circumstances, some young people may not be able to have an equal say on the basis of class, education, sex, race, disability, size, age, nationality, ethnicity, lack of experience, language or personal factors such as shyness and difficulty articulating their views. Special and active measures need to be taken to establish the value of respect for all, to be sensitive to power dynamics in youth interaction, and to include those who are at particular risk of exclusion (see section 3.6 for detailed discussion).

3. **Build young people's capabilities to participate effectively.** Young people cannot participate effectively if they have not had the opportunity to learn how to do it. Skill building for participation is therefore essential. But participation cannot be preached. Lectures don't work because they undermine the very essence of participation. Preparing young people for participation involves dialogue, active deliberation and learning by doing – practicing what is taught. The nature of adult-adolescent relationships in any programme to promote capacity development needs to be carefully considered. Adolescents need to be able to listen, reflect, analyze, ask questions and challenge adults in the process of learning.

4. **Build adults' capacity to listen and to promote adolescent participation.** It is not enough for young people to have a voice and to know how to participate in different contexts. In Marta Santos Pais's view, "the

child's evolving capacity represents just one side of the equation: the other has to do with adults' evolving capacity and willingness to listen to, understand, and weigh the views expressed by the child" (1999a:7). It is difficult for genuine participation to take place when adults have already made up their mind and feel they have nothing to learn from adolescents. Many reviewers of this paper emphasized this aspect. Programmes need to promote a culture of adults changing attitudes and listening to children and young people at all levels, starting from the family (Edwards, 1996). In part this could involve training adults in facilitation skills and in becoming more aware of interaction dynamics.

5. **Ensure that adolescents are well informed.** Poor or incomplete information can lead to poor outcomes. In order to do a good job of assessing situations, evaluating options and taking responsible action, young people need accurate, relevant and timely information. While it is sometimes appropriate to do so, withholding critical information in the name of young people's immaturity – such as that related to the family budget, safer sex practices or the functions of school management – often causes harm and can unnecessarily limit adolescents. In addition to being provided with information, young people need to be equipped with skills and means to critique information.

6. **Believe in young people and allow them to be responsible.** Too often, young people find themselves undermined and bitter by the way in which they are judged, moralized, ridiculed, underestimated and humiliated by adults. For most adolescents, there is nothing like the feeling of being trusted and the experience of adults being enthusiastic about the young person's actions. They need to continually sense that adults and youth leaders have faith in their multiple capacities – to reason, to solve problems,

to achieve something important, to make a positive difference in the community. Young people also need to feel responsible, to have a range of areas where they take a lead or play a major role in assuring its outcome. Experiencing this, in an environment of love and respect, will give adolescents a feeling of confidence and importance, and further foster their social competence (Richman and Bowen in UNICEF, undated, section 3.1) assert:

> "… when families, peers, and community all convey to children the expectation that they can and will handle their responsibilities successfully and participate in valued ways, children's capacity for autonomous thinking and action becomes better developed and their social competence is fostered".

7. **Allow adolescents to take reasonable risks.** Trying out new things, learning skills, entering a relationship, creating projects, doing tests, exploration – virtually any type of engagement – is fraught with risk, with the possibility of something going wrong. But risk-taking is necessary for growth, and reflects the basic human impulse for freedom. Adolescents can benefit from appropriate guidance, and at times their decisions can be legitimately overruled, especially if their capacity is limited and the action may have severe, long term consequences. But as much as possible young people should be allowed to make their own decisions, even when this can lead to 'mistakes'. Knowing when to let go is one of the most important qualities adults require. To make mistakes, and to learn from them, is a fundamental part of being human. Strong admonishments and punishments in the face of error can cause considerable damage, and stifle initiative.

8. **Make time for participation.** It is hard to do meaningful participation in a hurry or as a 'quick, side activity'. Creating the necessary trust between adults and adolescents and learning new approaches takes time. Democratic procedure – thoughtful deliberation, fair assessment of different perspectives, ensuring everyone participates – also needs time. Effective participation, in a conference, research project or newspaper for example, requires time for preparation.[11] When processes are rushed the tendency will be to fall back on old undemocratic habits, or to 'pretend' to participate, which undermines the very basis of healthy adult-adolescent relationships.

9. **Make space for participation.** It is easy to exclude young people without even noticing it. Many of life's everyday decisions – what to do in the library, how to market the vegetables, where

to place the water tap, which events to set up – as well as larger decisions about budgets, leadership, rules and priorities are made reflexively by adults without involving adolescents. The language, format, style, furniture, procedure and scheduling can all signal adolescents to keep out of the circles of influence and power.[12] Decision-making, and the way it is done, needs to be re-organized in a way that is inviting to young people, with the expectation that they'll be there. Leaders of Ecuador's Youth Forum explained the importance of space to the International Youth Foundation's Karen Pittman in this way:

> "Space – room in our basic images of how things should be. The kind of space that causes one, almost reflexively, to set a place at the table because a family member is late, but presumably coming" (Pittman, Irby and Cahill, 1996:1).

10. **Connect participation to young people's interests.** Too often, adolescents become bored with participation because it doesn't relate to something that matters to them. Involving young people in a wonderfully participatory theater group about AIDS will quickly lose its appeal if their primary concern is jobs, and jobs are not addressed. For participation to work, adolescents need to have a stake in it and to be able to construct their own relevance. This is one of the reasons why young people need to be involved in the process of defining priorities and setting the agenda from the start. According to Ashworth,

> "Youth need to share with other participants the underlying expectations and assumptions of the programme. In addition, youth must subscribe to the groups concerns, believe their participation is important, and feel that their identity will not be threatened" (in Bronstein, et al, 1999:4).

11. **Be transparent.** 'Fuzzy' participation – in which young people don't quite know why they are there, what the goals are, how it will work and what will come afterwards – is a recipe for disaster. In any participation process, the purpose, assumptions, limits and ground rules need to be clear to all. For example, what are the (said and unsaid) rules of the game, how do they work, how much can they be changed, and who gets to make them? The organizational structure, roles and extent of power need to be well established. Is the agenda set or open to significant amendment? Are young people being consulted for their opinions or are they making decisions? What are the boundaries of influence? Will they have access to decision-makers and

decision-making processes? The 'follow-up', including what will happen with the research findings or recommendations, needs to be clarified from the outset. To do this well, it is best to involve young people in all stages of a process, from start to follow-up. Where this is not possible, the types of constraints and reasons for them should be revealed and discussed early. Pretending all participants have equal say when they don't, creating expectations that cannot be fulfilled and raising false hopes can deeply undermine participation.

12. **Be honest; don't patronize.** Well meaning adults can go overboard with their zeal for youth participation. Young people's views can be romanticized as invariably brilliant and 'authentic', regardless of the quality of their thought and insight. This is unhelpful, because it patronizes adolescents and deprives them of the opportunity to critique and further develop their reasoning. Just like adults, adolescents are also capable of undemocratic tendencies, such as being arrogant, manipulative, dominating the discussion, and exploiting others. Often, adults feel awkward about confronting young people about these problems. But ignoring or glossing over these issues is not healthy. Instead, it is better to challenge young people in a supportive and respectful manner, and to facilitate processes that enable young people to challenge each other.

13. **Be democratic.** Great ideas and values ring hollow if they are professed but not practiced. Therefore, the structure and process of youth participation needs to reflect the principles and procedures of democracy. These include the view that everyone is of equal value, respect for minority positions, freedom of expression, freedom from recrimination, active deliberation and the practice of due process. Democratic practice enhances the quality, equity, space and opportunity for youth participation. Crucially, democratic culture can help avoid manipulation and abuse of young people for parochial ends, such as fundraising for personal gain, turning the 'youth wings' of political parties into vigilante thugs, or the genocidal mobilization of youth under Hitler.

14. **Create a supportive policy environment.** Policies and laws that are supportive of adolescent participation can provide a useful legal framework for promoting participation. They can signal the importance of adolescent participation in the country, provide useful direction of how to proceed, delineate key responsibilities, bring much needed legitimacy to young people in the eyes of authorities and enable the creation of critical new institutions. An important case in point is the emphasis on youth participation in

recent international policy making on AIDS, population, women's rights, environment and housing, all of which have had a discernable impact in galvanizing increased attention on young people. National level action is especially important too. The new South African constitution, for instance, explicitly recognizes the right of students to form their associations in schools. Many countries have also adopted national reproductive health policies that recognize the critical place of active youth involvement and leadership. Finally, NGOs too can adopt progressive policies in this area. A particularly strong example of an NGO policy that emphasizes children and adolescent as social actors and their right to participate is Save the Children UK's *Towards a children's agenda: New challenges for social development* (1995).

15. **Pay attention to bridging the gap between policy and practice.** While laws and policies promoting youth participation are important, they do not automatically change the reality on the ground. It is one thing to adopt progressive policy changes supportive of adolescent involvement but another to have them reflected in practice. This is especially true for countries where government capacity to implement and enforce policies is weak. Many young people interviewed for this paper asserted that the real challenge now is not the creation of yet more youth friendly policies, but finding ways to effectively implement the 'beautiful commitments already laid down on paper'. Moreover, young people are quick to point out that the gap between policy and practice is not limited to governments alone, but is also common in the conduct of well meaning organizations for children and adolescents.

3.6 WHO GETS TO PARTICIPATE?

Human rights apply equally to all people. Article 2 of the CRC explicitly states that all rights in the Convention are to be fully enjoyed by each and every child, without discrimination. For this reason, the question of *who* gets to participate and who is left out in programmes and processes is especially serious. However well done, participation is not good enough if it excludes or denies adequate opportunity for young people on the basis of certain characteristics or affiliations.

But the reality is often starkly opposite. Worldwide, there is little equity in the capabilities, opportunities and support for participation that young people enjoy. There are many examples of this, and some of them are familiar. Girls don't get to participate in schooling as much as boys do, especially at secondary and higher education levels. Adolescents with disabilities are often hidden away and denied a chance to participate in numerous aspects of life. Young people from richer families enjoy better access to health care, recreation, computers and travel. Adolescents in refugee camps have less opportunity to decide on how to live their life, including the friends they can make and the music they can listen to. Participation in national and international meetings tends to be limited to a small elite, usually from privileged backgrounds or with good connections with people in power.

Many types of discrimination can deny young people a fair opportunity to participate. Some of the major bases for which they can be excluded are listed in the table below. Multiple bases for discrimination can converge to have a particularly privileging or devastating effect, especially where some features 'count' more than others. Young people belonging to ethnic or linguistic minority, or those with disabilities often have limited opportunities while seeking employment or other avenues for advancement.

Programmes to promote adolescent participation that fail to adequately address the reality of or potential for discrimination may end up reinforcing the problem. UNICEF recognizes the challenge in this statement:

> "UNICEF's determination to reach to the most disadvantaged children means it must be prepared to reach out beyond those children's representatives who have already developed the skills and opportunities to ensure their voices may be heard. If we fail in this respect, we run the risk that initiatives we promote and support may be skewed in favor of the articulate, the organized and easy to reach, thereby serving to perpetuate rather than to reduce inequity" (UNICEF, 1999a:10).

Explicit measures need to be taken to create more equitable opportunities for young people.   The following considerations outline ways in which this could be done:

1. **Actively ensure a wide diversity of people are able to participate (equal opportunity).** Particular care needs to be taken to remove unnecessary barriers that disqualify or limit any young person's participation. Additionally, steps need to be taken to actively recruit adolescents who tend to be underrepresented.   This is especially the case for young people where discrimination is based on less immediately visible factors, such as class or experience, or those who are less accessible, such as those living in rural areas or unaffiliated with social institutions. Another consideration is the need to support young people to deal with factors that may constrain their participation, such as the cost of transport, opportunity costs of forgoing normal activities or resistance from parents.[13] A simple 'discrimination check' tool to ascertain maximum inclusion can be included in the planning process.

    A particularly pertinent issue for adolescent

THE BASES ON WHICH ADOLESCENTS CAN FACE DISCRIMINATION		
sex (male or female)	education	disability
class (income and wealth)	language	amount of experience
age	political beliefs/affiliation	your occupation
size	rural-urban	family occupation
looks	being new in the area	athletic ability
ethnicity	where you live	intellectual ability
race	past history of trouble	being quiet/shy
nationality	who you know	illness (e.g. AIDS)
religion	sexual orientation	personal choices
being an orphan	wars/refugee status	colonial history

participation is to ensure that younger adolescents are adequately represented, and that settings and procedures are appropriate to their evolving capacity. Too often, as in the case of the membership of youth organizations and in the feedback for this paper, it is youth aged 17-25 (or even older) who dominate. Finally, all actors – including especially teachers and others involved in daily interaction with adolescents – need to internalize an understanding of why non-discrimination is an important goal; otherwise, the promotion of equitable participation can become a sham and cause resentment against 'quota filling'.

2. **Promote equal participation (supportive environment).** Having a diversity of people is not enough if the dynamic of participation is undemocratic and skewed. Common problems include domination by a few and the marginalization of minority views. Boys may dominate girls, and the rich often assume a greater role for themselves too. Moreover, it can be especially tempting to rally around those who are articulate and confident and saying the 'right thing', but this can often crowd out those who are shy or have less acceptable views. Ensuring that there is an even playing field is therefore important, through attention to seating arrangements, rules for speaking, use of language and other aspects that are described well in many publications. The role of adults in meetings with adolescents (and older youth in relation to younger children) needs particular clarification and examination, because it is often easy for older people to take control in overt and hidden ways. Setting clear ground rules together at the beginning of the process can help prevent some of these problems. Doing a 'map' of the participation -- to show who sat where, the frequency and length of people's interventions, an analysis of whose views had the most influence on the outcomes -- and discussing the map together can be especially insightful. A range of other evaluation tools can also provide useful feedback.

3. **Institute fair representation and accountabi-lity (democratic accountability).** Most young people who represent the youth continue to be selected by adults rather than democratically chosen by their peers. Though this practice violates one of the most basic principles of fair representation, it is widely practiced in schools, boards, councils and even progressive youth organizations. As a result the 'favorites', the 'sure bets' and 'less troublesome' get chosen to act on behalf of the young, without their mandate, and regardless of the biases they may reflect. Ensuring that adolescents can choose their own representatives through a transparent and deliberative process is elementary to ending

discrimination. The democratic process itself can best address genuine concerns about whether youth elected by their peers will be up to the task and safeguard the reputation of the organization. Naturally these processes take time and resources, but are vital to fair process.

Even then, as with adults, given the choice many young people will choose to be represented by those who are exceptional rather than ordinary (after all it might bring them better results). Ensuring there is equitable representation around the table will take time to achieve, and in the meantime privileged young people will enjoy a disproportionately high representation. Neither is there a guarantee, (and much evidence to the contrary), that representatives will automatically work in the interests of those who put them in a position of authority. For all these reasons, it is critical to develop and support mechanisms to ensure that youth representatives receive their mandate from their constituents and are made accountable to them, through means such as collective priority setting, report back mechanisms, participatory decision-making and regular elections.

4. **Invest in young people equitably (capability).** Even with diversity and democratic procedure in place, participation can be uneven because of disparities in ability, preparation and experience among different participants. Many of these disparities arise from deep, long-term factors – such as education, access to resources, the type of encouragement from supportive communities, engagement in multiple cultural activities. An adolescent with low literacy skills, inadequate clothing, violent living environment, and little time to reflect and prepare will have a difficult time participating as powerfully as a young person in an opposite situation. (Many young people in difficult circumstances do extremely well, but should not romanticize resilience or underestimate the real risks and disadvantages they face.) Disparities in adolescent participation will often reflect the larger disparities in their lives, and these cannot be erased through inclusion and procedure alone.

For these reasons programmes for adolescents will often need to take a long-term perspective and ensure that access to important resources and services, especially related to education, health care and economic opportunity, is universally and equitably available to all. In part this will involve taking proactive remedial measures in areas that have been historically discriminatory by, for example, ensuring schools are safe and respectful environments for both girls and boys, and that user fees in health do not exclude those who cannot afford to pay.

The Participation Rights of Adolescents: A strategic approach

4. KEY STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE EFFECTIVE ADOLESCENT PARTICIPATION

There are multiple ways to promote adolescent participation. Different strategies will serve different purposes in different contexts, and decisions about what to do are usually best made by the people concerned with the situation and the institutions closest to them. Nevertheless, from a general perspective, not all approaches are equally effective at achieving the desired outcomes. It is therefore not sufficient to be 'doing good things'; policy makers and programme staff need to be *strategic* in their analysis and intervention designs, especially if they seek to have lasting, sustainable and widespread impact.

Based on the theoretical orientation of this paper, lessons learned from the literature and experience, and discussions with key informants, adolescent participation can be most strategically promoted by taking action on the following seven recommendations:

1. **Support situation analyses of adolescent well-being to spur wider understanding, dialogue and action.** The situation analysis can be part of an overall country analysis or focused on adolescents. In either case it should:

- be done in a manner that involves the fullest possible level of effective adolescent participation

- reflect the developmental approach to adolescent well-being (section 2) by organizing the situation analysis in terms of adolescent capabilities, opportunities and supportive environments

- not only account for gaps and problems of adolescents, but also map out the strengths and opportunities for adults and young people to contribute to adolescent well-being

- recognize the differences between groups of young people and their circumstances, and ensure adequate representation of different voices to be heard

- not only collect data for programming/policy, but also stimulate widespread public dialogue on the issues raised, including through publication of youth-friendly information

- involve the active participation of key partners including NGOs, youth organizations, development agencies and the government so as to benefit from their input and allow for wide ownership of the analysis.

Crucially, disaggregated data collection and analysis on adolescents should be mainstreamed in national data systems and processes. These include national census data, periodic demographic and health surveys (DHS), and routine collection of information at schools, health centers and the like. Without such specific data, it is difficult to understand problems and opportunities faced by young people, and to place these on the public and policy agendas (Edwards, 1996). Designing a clear advocacy strategy for adolescent specific data collection/analysis and capacity building for why and how to do it well need to be a key priority in the next decade.

2. **Prioritize participation efforts in settings that are experienced by adolescents on a *regular, day-to-day* basis.** Most adolescent participation projects are *project based*, involving relatively small numbers of adolescents in activities outside the regular processes of their lives, usually for a limited period of time only. Instead, participation efforts need to concentrate on the places in and people with whom adolescents spend much of their time, such as in the home, community, school or workplace, and with family members, peers, teachers and employers. The nature of day-to-day interactions between adolescents and the people around them needs to become a central concern. As important as special projects and events can be, participation in them will be less effective and less sustainable if there is no scope for meaningful participation in day-to-day living. An over-focus on more visible and shorter-term forms of participation can run the risk of neglecting the main aspects of adolescent life.

3. **Mainstream adolescent participation in key institutions and processes.** Many adolescent participation activities are held on an ad-hoc basis, where the duration, settings, levels and terms of participation are set by adult discretion. This sort of arrangement is often unsatisfactory, because it is infrequent, young people are usually brought in at the last minute, are made to participate in a manner that is poorly suited to their needs, or excluded at whim. Ad-hoc participation tends to fail to link with and draw from important ongoing processes in adolescents' lives, and limits adequate follow-up and

accountability. Instead, participation needs to be *mainstreamed* such that the involvement of young people is *a matter of course* or a regular feature of the functioning of the institution or process. Building the capacity of adults to relate to young people in more mutual ways and allow them the space to think for themselves is particularly important in this regard. Young people will also need to have access to information about powerful institutions and processes so that they can exert strategic pressure to ensure their own involvement within them.

Using their reputation and connections, international child serving agencies need to play an influential role in mainstreaming the participation of adolescents and youth organizations in key processes at national and global levels. Examples include the formation of national policies, programme planning, monitoring and evaluation, and the reporting process to the Committee on the CRC. To be effective, adolescents need to be well informed about both the issues at stake and the processes of decision-making.

4. **Support the formation and development of youth associations that maximize the space for democratic adolescent participation.** It is difficult for young people to participate effectively in a hostile environment that provides few opportunities for meaningful engagement. One way to counter this is to support different types of youth associations – issue clubs, sports teams, student councils, local youth bodies, and national youth organizations, among others – to provide the essential *space* for adolescents to participate meaningfully. These associations can foster peer interaction which has been found to be effective in a variety of contexts, including health promotion and improved learning at school. Youth associations can also help build capabilities and confidence, facilitate multiple opportunities for meaningful engagement, counter negative stereotypes, contribute to shaping a positive youth image and provide a safe and supportive environment for young people to take initiative. As noted above, democracy should be promoted within the youth associations – in terms of their composition, structure and functioning – because they will then be more likely to promote effective and equitable adolescent participation, and be more vital and sustainable in the long-term.

5. **Ensure that socio-economic policies and investments are supportive of child and adolescent well-being.** The effectiveness of adolescent participation programmes will be severely compromised if basic social services and livelihood opportunities are not secured. Quality education and health services, that are the essential foundations on which adolescent participation can be built, require adequate resourcing to function effectively. However, recent trends including the increased costs of servicing the debt burden[14], reductions in overseas development assistance (ODA), tighter budgets and the introduction of user fees or 'cost sharing' all threaten the provision of these basic services, that are particularly hard hitting on the poor. Opportunities to secure adequate livelihoods are also lower for many young people; including those who have secondary education. Advocates for adolescents therefore cannot afford to ignore the bigger picture, and must in particular pay attention to the impacts of fiscal policies. These involve analyses of engagement with macroeconomic policies at the global and national levels, including most recently in the development of country poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs). A positive set of economic policies and practices may in the end be one of the most powerful *supportive environments* of all for adolescent participation.

6. **Make the case for adolescent participation at national and global levels.** While the scientific and programme evidence in favor of a participatory developmental approach is strong, it is not widely understood and shared. Partners therefore need to make a compelling case for this perspective and its implications for policy and practice, and build a broad alliance of support at global and country levels. Partnership with key institutions, such as the World Bank and leading youth agencies[15], will be critical at both the international and country level. Working to include child and adolescent participation within the UNDAF process will also be essential to transforming these concepts into reality in the broader framework of UN action on the ground. Building a strong argument will require multiple strategies, including scientific evidence, a strong theoretical basis for this approach, persuasive arguments linking adolescent participation to other key development issues such as economic growth and human rights, and concrete case studies of successful adolescent participation. It will also need to be advanced on several fronts, including through high-level representations, inclusion in key ongoing processes and events, and in partners' interaction with other agencies. Such actions are only likely to succeed with concerted and consistent leadership.

To bring the issue of adolescent participation to a broader audience, influential global publications can be dedicated to this theme, for example UNICEF's *State of the World's Children* report.

7. **Stimulate real public dialogue and debate on adolescent participation.** Adopting and

implementing a participatory developmental approach to young people requires several major shifts in the ways in which young people are viewed and programmes are conceptualized. This will take time to take root, and cannot happen through technical input and high level lobbying alone. Advancing adolescent participation is in many ways a question of inspiring deep social and cultural change. Partners need to use effective means to engage with people at all levels, especially at the community level, to create greater understanding and a new 'common sense'

of how best to work with adolescents. The involvement of communities, including family members, teachers, health workers and the media, is especially important because in the final analysis they are the ones in a position to exert the greatest influence on adolescent lives.[16] Most importantly, this process also requires the active and meaningful participation of adolescents in the dialogue, including through effective opportunities to access information and shape their own public image.

5. EFFECTIVE ENTRY POINTS FOR ADOLESCENT PARTICIPATION AND CRITERIA FOR THEIR SELECTION

Adolescent participation can take place in a multitude of settings and ways. One of the main propositions of this paper is that promoting adolescent development involves enlarging the range and types of participation opportunities available to young people. But of course it is not possible to do everything. One option, therefore, is to leave the choice of focus wide open, to encourage each country programme to pick and choose from the range of possibilities, and take the position that what you do doesn't matter as long as it is meaningful participation. This approach can allow for maximum flexibility and the space for innovation. At the same time, as was argued in the previous section, the lack of a strategic approach can mean that impact is reduced, and that activities while worthwhile in themselves do not contribute effectively to the overall goal of promoting adolescent participation. Interventions may be especially susceptible to focusing on more visible activities, at the expense of less exciting alternatives that may have a larger and more sustainable effect.

The development of clear *criteria* in the choice of entry points can help maximize both impact and flexibility. The discussion in sections 3 and 4 above can help decide some of the key elements of the criteria. These include:

- most likely to contribute to the developmental aspects of adolescent well-being (capability, opportunity, supportive environment)
- provides access to the largest number of adolescents
- ensures greatest equity in participation
- reaches adolescents who are at greatest risk
- fills critical gaps identified in the mapping/situation analysis
- contributes to greatest long term impact on the *day to day* aspects of adolescent lives
- maximizes opportunities for adolescent decision making
- most likely to be sustainable over the long term
- allows for (long term) monitoring and measurement
- offers greatest potential of benefiting the organization or process in which adolescents are involved

Other important considerations include:

- comparative strength of each partners' country programme, including staff
- linkages with existing areas of work
- availability and priorities of effective partners
- opportunity to link adolescent participation with critical ongoing processes in-country, such as education sector reform or emergency programmes for refugees
- cost of implementing effective interventions

These criteria (and others) can form the basis of a tool to aid in the selection of effective entry points in each country. Some entry points will clearly be more effective and require more attention than others. But the exact choice of these will vary across different country programmes. What is essential is that the weight assigned to different elements of the criteria and the basis of the choice(s) be transparent and open to scrutiny.

On the basis of the criteria listed above, and the strategic considerations listed in section 4, six important entry points for adolescent participation are further elaborated below.[17] These are: schools, health services, community development and environmental care, young people's associations, the media and political processes. Within each of these settings, potential interventions that can enhance the capability, opportunities and/or supportive environment for adolescent participation and development are outlined.

5.1 SCHOOLS

1. **Strengthen the quality of learning and interaction.** At present most schools practice didactic, rote learning that stifles creativity and critical thinking, and is detrimental to both educational achievement and adolescent development. Teaching pedagogy needs to be transformed in a manner that treats adolescents as active learners rather than passive recipients, that fosters learning by doing and experimentation, and that encourages young people to test, err and retry without fear of humiliation or punishment (Santos Pais, 1999a; UNICEF, 1998b). Relationships between teachers and students need to be characterized by trust, caring, safety, fairness, transparency and

respect. Curriculum reform and teacher training that promotes democratic interaction, and programmes to support teachers to implement these principles need to be prioritized. It is particularly important in this regard to ensure school environments are safe for both sexes and that teachers treat both boys and girls equally. Peer teaching and learning is also effective and needs to be promoted. Adolescents can play an important role in evaluating the quality of the learning environment and in contributing to plans for improvement.

2. **Promote life skills and ensure school practice is consistent with their message.** The life-skills approach is increasingly recognized as critical to promoting healthy behaviors among young people, and used widely in many programmes. The main purpose of teaching life skills is to empower young people to take charge of their lives and strengthen their capability to negotiate multiple challenges in life. However, as Baldo and Furniss (1999:6) emphasize,

> "because life skills are related to action and behavior, they have to be learned by practice: by active learning methods in the curriculum and by enacting life skills in the school environment. The school must become an enactment of [the desired] life in society: a microcosm of society which acts as though rights [and participation] matter."

Teaching life skills in a manner that contradicts their content and allows no room for adolescent participation can severely undermine its impact, and even lead to cynical disregard for its espoused values.

3. **Ensure school discipline is fair, transparent and promotes learning.** While school discipline rarely receives serious attention from policy makers, it is one of the highest concerns of young people worldwide. Violent means to impose discipline are routinely and arbitrarily used – including caning different parts of the body, slapping, punching and even throwing students against the wall – despite policies that forbid or restrict these practices. As a result many students are left fearful, unable to concentrate on learning, bitter and injured, and some have even died (HRW, 1999). A violent environment profoundly erodes adolescents' self-esteem, confidence, initiative and sense of trust that are requisites for adolescent participation and development. Interventions need to actively work with policy makers, teachers, parents and students to institute humane methods of discipline that respect the dignity of young people, and that emphasize learning rather than punishment. The use of

corporal punishment and other humiliating forms of discipline need to be eliminated completely.[18] Student participation in setting and monitoring school rules will be an important element in ensuring that schools are safe and fair environments for adolescents.

4. **Promote democratic interaction and governance in schools.** The exercise of power in schools profoundly influences how young people construct their understanding of authority in larger society, including the functioning of democratic leadership.[19] Lectures on citizenship and civic virtues are not very effective in engendering these values in young people, especially if their experience of schooling and school governance is authoritarian and lacks respect for consultation and due process. Daily discrimination based on gender or class categories can be particularly insidious. The direct experience of democratic association and deliberation is much more effective in preparing young people for active participation in later life (Harber, 1997; Hart, 1997). Interventions need to explore ways in which student participation can be enhanced at multiple levels of school governance. Areas for attention include the formation of student councils[20] that operate on democratic principles, young people's involvement on school boards and parent-teacher associations, a critical review of the roles of students as 'prefects' or 'monitors', and the creation of mechanisms that ensure students are consulted when key decisions are made.

The school can also serve as a useful base from which to analyze and link with governance processes in society. In Colombia, for example, schools are invited to observe the functioning of municipal government, learn about the allocation of powers, responsibilities and the limits of their use, and to propose ways in which they could take part in the municipal council.

5. **Train and support teachers to promote student participation.** Teachers can strongly oppose young people's increased participation in school life. Nonetheless, adopting a strong anti-teacher stance in the pursuit of adolescent participation will be unhelpful in changing the school environment. Teachers are obviously central to reforming the structure of school interaction, and require maximum support to enable them to learn how to reorient their functioning. Available research indicates that educators who have a high degree of confidence in themselves are both effective and perceived by students to be more friendly, fair and supportive (Scales and Leffert, 1999:37). Programmes need to invest in teacher training and support, in the use of participatory pedagogy, promotion of

student governance and how to respond to special student needs such as disability or sexual vulnerability. Such programmes require careful scrutiny and development; a new recruit educated in didactic fashion, beaten with a cane, and provided little opportunity for participation is unlikely to turn into a confident and democratic teacher (Ukpokodu, 1997).[21] Transforming teacher education, however, may be considerably limited in the absence of a democratic restructuring of the institutional set-up, as appears to be the case in post-apartheid South Africa (Moletsane, in Harber, 1998). Other constrains include chronically poor working conditions that wreak havoc on teacher morale.

Many programmes in this area have tended to involve support for ministries of education and, to a lesser extent, NGOs. Because teachers usually sense little ownership of these institutions, it may be worthwhile to explore new collaborations with democratic teachers' unions.

6. **Support schools to reach out of school youth.** In many countries, half or more of school aged children are not in primary school, and the situation is considerably worse for secondary education. Involving large numbers of out of school youth in sustained programmes is an extremely difficult challenge because of their diffused presence, diverse schedules and lack of affiliation with accessible public institutions. With some imagination and modest additional resources, schools can provide one of the most powerful means by which to reach young people outside its perimeters.[22] Potential programmes for out of school youth include literacy classes, vocational training, life-skills, music, recreation, computer literacy and micro-credit management. Out of school youth need to be involved in identifying areas to be covered, rather than adults simply making assumptions about the types of skills that they need. Moreover, through active leadership, schools may be able to serve as "centers for sustainable development at community level" by involving both students and out of school youth in participatory activities, including research, environmental care, health education and lobbying (Hart, in Satterthwaite, 1996:246-55). To be sustainable, these initiatives will need to be attractive to disadvantaged adolescents, flexible in their requirements and cost-effective. However, particular care should be taken to ensure that 'second chance' educational opportunities do not become cheap, 'second class' alternatives for poor youth, and maximum opportunities need to be created to enable them to rejoin the mainstream.

7. **Advocate for greater investment in basic education.** While the CRC explicitly affirms that basic education is a universal right for all, over 100 million children, 60% of whom are girls, are not able to enjoy primary schooling and many more never make it to secondary school. No child or adolescent should be denied schooling because of inability to pay, as was recently affirmed at the World Education Forum in Dakar. Initiatives, therefore, need to both support and put pressure on national governments and donor countries to fulfill their obligation to provide universal basic education. Moreover, adolescent participation in schools often depends on a minimal level of *quality*. Improved quality and democratic governance can reinforce one another, and "the more you have of one the easier it will be to achieve the other" (Shaeffer, interview). But quality requires investments; for without adequate resources it is not possible to ensure that students have adequate books, classrooms, water and toilets, and that teachers have sufficient preparation, training, supervision, salaries and motivation. (The costs of under-investing in education are likely to be even higher in terms of reduced health status, lowered productivity and the expense of programming for out of school youth.) Promoters of adolescent participation therefore need to keep the larger picture in mind, for economic policies that restrict schooling access and quality *can significantly diminish space and motivation for participation in school*. Continued, concerted action to advocate for greater investment in education, and especially reduction of debt servicing obligations that cripple resource flows towards education, is absolutely vital (Oxfam, 1998; UNICEF, 1999g; UNICEF 1999i). The impact of school reform processes, such as the introduction of user fees, also needs greater scrutiny to ensure that equity and access are not further compromised.[23]

8. **Make the case for secondary education.** Primary schooling is of central importance to younger adolescents, because many children do not complete primary education until age 15 or even higher. However, *ensuring that young people can access secondary school for at least 3-4 years may constitute the single most influential intervention for promoting development and participation of older adolescents.* Recent evidence also suggests that secondary education may be one of the most significant markers of human well-being. Establishing the strategic and financial implications of investing in secondary education, especially when the state of primary education still needs considerable improvement, is a major challenge that requires careful and focused reflection. Nevertheless, it should no longer be acceptable to ignore secondary schooling 'until primary education has been sorted out', particularly from the perspective of adolescent rights. Importantly, access to secondary schooling should be critically examined in terms of coverage and equity. Excitement over

scholarships for a marginal percentage of the population should be treated with caution, because programmes are needed to provide secondary school opportunity at large scale and to address basic structural determinants that undermine wider access.

5.2 HEALTH SERVICES

1. **Promote greater understanding of the developmental approach to adolescent health.** At the World Health Organization (WHO) and elsewhere, there is widespread recognition that health is a complete state of well-being, rather than merely the absence of disease. Nevertheless, the majority of health interventions for adolescents employ a problem or disease-focused approach, and thus fail to fully promote young people's participation and development (see section 2). Interventions need to make the case for why a broad based developmental approach is preferable, and propose ways in which health services need to be reorganized to reflect this perspective. An important component of this will be to demonstrate how the entire community (not just health workers) around adolescents – including parents, teachers, peers and young people themselves – need to play a role in promoting youth health. A forceful case will also need to be made for why the quality of care and services matters, and how they can be sustained in practice.[24] Identifying practical measures for strengthening the underlying protective factors and the positive aspects of health remains a challenge.

2. **Support the development of youth-friendly health services. [25]** Young people's number one complaint about health services usually has to do with the attitudes and behaviors of health workers towards them (Balmer, 1994; Webb, 1997:viii; WHO, 1999). Adolescents will be reluctant to seek care and counseling if they experience health workers as condescending, judgmental, impatient and unwilling to listen, if services are delivered at inconvenient times, if information and supplies (such as contraceptives) are withheld, and if privacy and confidentiality are compromised. Interventions need to promote the concept of youth-friendly services, train health workers and managers in how to interact with young people, and support the establishment of management mechanisms that can adequately foster this approach. In part this includes learning to respond to specific needs, such as of adolescents with disabilities. Generating community support for these initiatives, especially when they involve sensitive topics such as sexuality, will be vital to sustaining the effort. Developing and supporting 'model programmes' can be useful for selling the idea and training staff, but care needs to be taken to ensure that models are cost effective and replicable.[26] The regular availability of health supplies at affordable prices is also crucial, but ensuring this may often be beyond the means of local actors alone.

The involvement of adolescents in health education, health worker training, monitoring and evaluation of health service delivery, and reaching out to other young people can be enormously beneficial. This can best be done if adolescent participation is mainstreamed in the health service *structure*. Examples of this include peer counselors linked to formal health delivery systems and creation of youth advisory boards with clear roles and procedures. In some instances young people can also be recruited to serve as (part-time) staff, provided this is not coerced and young people are remunerated fairly.

3. **Support adolescent health activities in the community.** Healthy adolescents need healthy

CANADIAN AND ENGLISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN ADOLESCENTS' VIEWS
ON YOUTH-FRIENDLY SERVICES

- don't look like a clinic
- be open after school hours
- have empathetic and knowledgeable counselors who could be trusted
- should provide for unbiased, nonjudgmental advice
- should guarantee complete confidentiality
- staff should listen and try to understand rather than talk down to their patients
- staff should have enthusiasm for youth health

Source: excerpts from WHO, 1999:108

communities. Young people need to understand the ways in which their social and physical environment influences their health, and have opportunities to play an active role in its assessment. This sort of 'participatory action' enhances learning and understanding of health and its determinants.[27] Schools, community organizations, local religious institutions and others can all support adolescents in this process. As a first step, young people can work with adults to create an environmental map of the community that would identify both supports (playgrounds, health centers, nutrition sources, supportive adults, information) and hazards (contaminated water, fast traffic, sources of harmful substances, violence). As has been noted above, this should be done in a manner that uses the broadest definition of health, including opportunities for recreation and social interaction for all children and adolescents, rather than medical aspects only. Thereafter, follow-up actions to educate and dialogue with the community, improve the situation, and lobby local leaders can be devised and implemented with adolescents. Child-to-child and school health programmes can also be useful in this context.[28] Finally, however, while young people can be effective agents for community health, they should not be turned into 'super-cleaners' and burdened with inappropriate tasks that are the proper responsibility of adults.[29]

4. **Support the formation of youth health associations.** Peer based programmes have been shown to be some of the most effective methods for promoting health. Examples of this include anti-AIDS clubs in Zambia, safe-guard youth from AIDS (SYFA) in Uganda, Save your generation (SYGA) in Ethiopia, school health clubs in the Cameroon, and the Scouts and Guides who have been involved in a number of health activities worldwide (Foumbi, interview; Mabala, interview; UNICEF, 1997c; WHO, 1999). Youth associations can provide young people with information, counseling and services in a safe environment, and encourage them to take appropriate actions to safeguard their own and others' health. Spaces and opportunities for youth recreation can also be very important, and need to be promoted especially in urban settings where open areas are extremely limited. The Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA) located in a poor settlement outside Nairobi is an excellent example of the positive impact of recreation on the lives of both adolescent boys and girls. The programme, which involves over 10,000 youth on a regular basis, has also expanded to include HIV awareness and a specific project on gender equity (Brady, 1998; Mensch, et al, 1998).

5.3 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CARE

1. **Promote the concept of youth-friendly communities.** A supportive environment is necessary for adolescent development and participation, but communities need to be able to see how they can concretize this in practice. Key questions include: What sorts of roles could different actors, including adolescents, play? What types of opportunities and spaces do young people need to thrive? Which services are the most important for adolescent well-being and how should they be organized? Which aspects of community life and the environment pose the most risk to young people and how could these be minimized? The promotion of good practices from communities that have achieved a high level of youth-friendliness can often be inspirational. However, it will be even more important to engage adults and adolescents to debate, shape and manage their own vision for their own community. Interventions should seek to build as wide a supportive web as possible. In many communities it will be especially important to involve religious leaders, both because they can sometimes provide the strongest resistance, and also because their support can be very valuable. In Uganda, for instance, UNICEF and partner NGOs have collaborated successfully with the Roman Catholic Church on its SYFA project, because "the church knows more than us about how to work with the cultural context" (Foumbi, interview).

2. **Involve adolescents in community development.** Youth participation in community development can prove to be meaningful to both young people and the community as a whole. One observer describes this succinctly:

> "Communities are dependent upon the minds, hearts and hands of their young people and youth are dependent upon the viability, vitality, protection and attention of their community" (Cahill, 1997:v).

Adolescents can be involved in research, including mapping out community assets and deficits, and analyzing the relationship between the environment and specific positive or detrimental health outcomes.[30] PRA techniques are especially effective with adolescents because they maximize opportunities for participation and use visual and activity based methods. Good examples of this include Actionaid's work in Nepal (Johnson, Hill and Ivan-Smith, 1995) and

PeaceChild's youth created sustainability indicator packs (Woollcombe, email). Where possible, new technologies such as video can be particularly effective in drawing in adolescents as well (see section 5.5). Young people can also contribute to finding solutions by taking part in ongoing community wide activities, and initiating new youth focused activities. To be sustainable, interventions need to ensure the initiatives are widely accepted in the community and continually replenished, without which exciting new developments can quickly fizzle out and frustrate adolescents who were involved in them.

3. **Involve adolescents in community decision making.** Community decisions are made at different levels and ways, and vary in different types of communities. Decision-making can also be both formal and informal. Interventions can seek ways to enlarge young people's opportunities to be involved in as many relevant decision-making processes as possible, strengthen their capabilities to do so effectively, and support communities to accept and encourage young people in their endeavors. Mainstreaming adolescent membership in key community bodies, such as local councils, school boards, water committees and security groups is especially important to ensure young people's involvement is systematized and cannot be excluded at whim. UNICEF's 'child-friendly cities initiative' and its experience of promoting decentralized municipal planning with young people can be especially helpful in this regard.[31]

4. **Explore ways in which to support adolescents to secure viable livelihoods.** Many young people, especially older adolescents who have completed or dropped out of school, confront enormous difficulties in securing the means to ensure their economic well-being. The AIDS pandemic has often made the situation worse by shifting the primary responsibility for household security onto younger people. At the same moment in which their economic responsibilities are growing, young people find that job opportunities are extremely scarce, the viability and attraction of working in subsistence agriculture is constantly diminishing, and opportunities to earn incomes in the informal economy are insufficient, insecure and frequently thwarted by government action. For many youth this represents a major crisis that can leave them feeling hopeless, deeply pessimistic about the future, and with an eroded sense of their place in the community. Several surveys indicate that economic security is increasingly the most important priority for older adolescents, and this may constitute the one of the most important programmatic challenges in the coming decade (Crowley, interview).

The benefits and potential modalities of micro-credit programmes, which appear to have been effective in supporting women, need to be carefully explored and evaluated for their usefulness to young people. Increasing adolescent skills can also be helpful, but these need to be linked to their viable use in the marketplace. Vocational training in traditional areas such as carpentry for boys and sewing for girls is often misguided and can waste limited resources. Interventions also need to ensure that government policies and actions do not unnecessarily frustrate youth involvement in the economy, particularly in 'gray' markets where 'unrecognized' activities such as street hawking may be some of the only viable opportunities open to young people. Liberty of movement, from rural to urban locations and within cities, and especially for girls from domestic to public settings, can be essential to opening up new economic possibilities for youth.[32]

5.4 YOUNG PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATIONS

1. **Map the situation of and potential for youth associations.** Participation in youth associations can meet many developmental needs of young people, by providing a sense of structure, purpose, belonging, safety, status and opportunities to make a difference (WHO, 1999:116). Youth associations can provide adolescents with opportunities and support to come together to talk about their situation, learn new skills, organize around mutual concerns and take joint action. There are many types of youth associations,[33] and because their capabilities, interests, strategies and reach vary widely, it can be helpful to map out the full range of their presence and activities in the country. Doing so can identify strengths and gaps, and help determine the partners and types of interventions that are likely to be the most effective. Additionally, just because they are youth organizations does not mean that their practice will necessarily allow for greater meaningful participation for adolescents (Hart, 1997:63-4; UNICEF, 1999b:17-21). Therefore, though it is difficult to establish in a quick survey, the structure and democratic processes within youth associations need to be evaluated in order to ascertain the space for adolescent participation in their functioning.

2. **Strengthen the capabilities of youth associations and promote the formation of viable new ones.** Increasing the number, types and capabilities of youth associations can enlarge the space for adolescent participation. The mapping tool above, and the types of criteria listed at the beginning of section 5, can help identify areas for investment and support that are likely to be most effective. From the outset it is important to prioritize support to groups that are connected and accountable to their membership, initiated through popular demand or genuinely inspired leadership, open to developing democratic forms of governance, and have the potential to be viable in the medium to long term. Special attention will be needed to strengthen management in organizations operated by adolescents, in recognition of their evolving capacities, relatively limited experience, greater rate of transition out of associations as they enter adulthood (WHO, 1999:137-141).[34] Support for the formation of an umbrella youth organization that is accountable to its members or national youth 'link organization' may be important to channel support to smaller associations that do not have the administrative or legal infrastructure to function as full NGOs.[35] Finally, opportunities for youth associations to network across countries, through conferences, workshops and email, may further strengthen their capability.

International organizations worldwide have been involved in supporting hundreds of different types of initiatives, and this experience can provide a useful reference point for future action. It may be worthwhile, however, to compile a systematic and analytic account of this experience, with a focus on how adolescent participation can best be promoted in youth associations.

3. **Involve youth associations in key processes.** Adolescents are increasingly selected and invited to participate in important review and decision-making processes in their individual capacity. While this can be useful, it is often more valuable to *mainstream* involvement by ensuring youth associations are viewed as key stakeholders and members of decision-making processes. Done democratically, this can ensure that youth representation is informed by and accountable to

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THE WEST AFRICAN YOUTH INITIATIVE

One example of a programme which is monitoring youth involvement is the West African Youth Initiative, a project designed to test the impact of peer education programmes addressing adolescent reproductive health issues. The project developed a plan to monitor and evaluate youth involvement in programme management (C. Lane, unpublished data, 1995). Putting this objective into effect includes the following indicators:

Indicator:
- number of young people trained;
- number employed working as volunteers;
- duties and roles taken by young people;
- amount of time young people contribute to the organization;
- membership of young people in advisory committees;
- youth attendance at planning and organizational meetings;
- active youth participation at meetings;
- opinions of young people about their involvement;
- opinions of community members about the level of youth involvement.

Methods of assessing these indicators include:
- training records;
- minutes of meetings;
- job descriptions (even for volunteers);
- work reports;
- interviewing young people, staff, community members, clients;
- observation at project site.

Source: An example of monitoring youth involvement, WHO, 1999:212

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the association membership, and allow for more steady engagement and follow up. Examples of this include the consultation between street children councils and center management (the *baraza ya watoto* at kuleana in Tanzania and the *bal sabha* at the Butterflies project in India are two cases in point), the involvement of working adolescents in lobbying at the Amsterdam and Oslo conferences on child labour in 1997, and the functioning of many student councils. In Senegal, the Working Children and Youth Union is an official member of the National Programme to Eliminate the Exploitation of Children at Work, and takes part in all meetings of this important policy making body (UNICEF, undated). This approach can also be particularly worthwhile in refugee situations, as can be seen from UNICEF's brief experience of supporting the formation of the Kosovar Youth Councils in six camps in Kukes (Bertrand Bainvel, draft paper 23/06/99). Another type of involvement are parallel youth advisory boards (e.g at the Mentor Foundation) that meet several times a year and provide advice to management (WHO, 1999:166). Finally, young people can also serve on the governing boards of organizations, as has recently been institutionalized in the International Planned Parenthood Foundation (IPPF).[36]

The literature and other evidence stresses the need to guard against an array of potential problems that can arise when working with youth associations. These included the need to be flexible and avoid imposing one structure across countries, such as a national youth movement with local chapters (Crowley, interview), to pay special attention to ensuring younger adolescents are not marginalized (UNICEF, 1997c:24-25), to take care not to concentrate too much power in one or few bodies that can easily become fascistic (Luciani, interview) and to ensure programming in this area takes adequate account of the evolving capacities of adolescents.

5.5   MEDIA

1. **Support increased coverage of youth in the media.** The mass media – including radio, TV, newspapers and magazines – exerts a large degree of influence on social norms and the contours of public debate. The media therefore represents a powerful opportunity to inform adults and young people about youth issues, and to stimulate public discussion on the rights, roles and responsibilities of adolescents. It can help reshape the dominant public image of adolescents from one of 'immature trouble-makers' to increasingly competent and resourceful citizens, and increase the focus on positive development measures.

Assessing the capacity of mass media in each country – their reach, audience, impact, philosophy – can help provide a solid baseline for programming (UNICEF, 1997c:63). Potential interventions include training editors and journalists to increase coverage of youth issues, critically examine the assumptions and consequences of adolescence that are usually covered, and improve their capacity to interview and interact with young people. The media can also be provided with information and resources to design youth-focused programmes. Because of its wide reach in many countries working with radio will be particularly effective. Successful examples of this include radio soap operas or serial dramas on teenage sexual health issues organized by the Tanzania Family Planning Association (UMATI) and the Jamaica Red Cross (WHO, 1999:46-8).[37]

2. **Promote youth voices through the media.** The media can also provide effective means through which adolescents communicate their own feelings, opinions and ideas. A number of successful initiatives have been developed in recent years, in part through the proliferation of new technologies. These include youth focused inserts in newspapers and weekly radio programmes (*Straight Talk* in Uganda and offshoots in other countries) and competitions to elicit youth views on specific topics (kuleana and TGNP in Tanzania and the *Mazingira Institute* in Kenya (Hart, 1997:54)). The international children's news organization *Children's Express*, staffed by young people aged 8-18, produces news articles 'by children for everybody' (see box). UNICEF has developed an innovative site *Voices of Youth* that provides internet connected young people an opportunity to comment on child rights issues. While most media initiatives are run by adults, others such as the *Mambo Leo* poster magazine in Tanzania has an editorial team of six young adolescents who manage virtually all aspects of its production (Obdam in Johnson, et al, 1998:211-214).[38]

While mass media allows for wide outreach, other types of media can also enable effective adolescent participation. Different types of theater have been used worldwide by young people to communicate their views and educate communities on a range of issues. Of these, participatory theater in local settings that allows for maximum interaction may be the most effective. The *Project Paranoa* in Brasilia allows young people to choose from a broad range of media – including music, painting, drawing, ceramics, dance and video – to document, communicate and follow-up on their concerns related to community issues (Hart, 1997:187).

CHILDREN'S EXPRESS

Children's Express is an international news organization staffed by children and young people aged 8 to 18. There are approximately 500 members worldwide. Six news bureaus operate in the United States and in the United Kingdom. The group's slogan is "by children for everybody" and their coverage of serious children's issues takes a youth point of view. Adults are the main target audience. Topics have included youth violence, sexuality, the environment and politics. Children's Express has produced weekly newspaper columns, books, television and radio segments and material for the Internet. The group was founded in New York City in 1975 and has filed thousands of stories on youth topics. They also convene roundtables on youth issues.

Source: Children's Express, UNAIDS and UNICEF, 1998

Working with different types of media can often be exciting for adolescents, and preferable over other didactic and restrictive opportunities. Young people who have been exposed to how their peers have used media and supported to develop their own ideas can be inspired to participate effectively themselves. While some of these approaches are expensive, their wide reach may justify the costs and favor replication, and other approaches are relatively low-cost. In each case, it is important to assess which adolescents and how many can participate in and be 'reached' by particular forms of media. Interventions should seek to create the maximum space possible for adolescent participation in the media, through schools, communities, youth associations and other appropriate institutional settings.

3. **Support adolescents to conduct media analyses and lobby for change.** While the media has enormous potential for contributing to adolescent participation, it can also be biased and harmful to their well-being. In addition to negative problem-focused portrayals of adolescents in the mass media, advertisements pitched at young people can be particularly insidious (New York youth group discussion). One increasing area of concern is tobacco advertising targeted at young people, particularly in the developing world where governments can be reluctant to intervene because of their dependence on tax revenues from cigarette sales. Young people need the skills and support to critically analyze the media including advertisements, and assess its impact on their lives. Key questions to ask of media include: What is being said and left unsaid about young people? Whose voice and what angle is covered? What image does it leave of young people generally and disadvantaged adolescents in particular? How does it affect desires and feelings of young people? Media analyses can be

done in highly participatory and active ways – cutting articles and images, taking a walking survey of signs and billboards in the neighborhood, juxtaposing different media next to each other – that can be enjoyable for adolescents of all ages.[39] With support, young people can also organize themselves to respond to media managers and owners, by writing letters to the editor, visiting media offices to express their concerns, producing collages to educate others about media impact, and holding press conferences. Media analyses can help adolescents gain critical analytical and lobbying skills that can also serve in a number of other contexts.

5.6 POLITICAL PROCESSES[40]

1. **Promote participatory citizen education and democratic practice in schools.** Ratification of the CRC in the past decade (with its provisions for civil and political rights for children) has coincided with the push for liberal democratization worldwide, and has led to increased interest in young people's involvement in political processes. This development has renewed attention to how schools can prepare youth for citizenship and the impact of schooling on young people's ability to function as vital citizens. As is clear from the principles of participation elaborated above, citizen or civic education that consists of information provision alone will fail to engender the values and skills necessary for young people's active citizenship. Moreover, in some countries there is a real danger that civic education will be manipulated to rally youth behind specific political parties rather than instill independent and critical action.

Interventions in this area therefore face tremendous challenges, and will need to take extra care to remain meaningful and resist hijacking. Support for democratic practice in schools and non-formal education settings, in both learning pedagogy and school governance, are likely to be the most effective ways in which to foster civic education over the long run (see section 5.1). The development of a citizenship-based curriculum (Ukpokodu, 1997) will be a critical area for support. A number of materials developed by UNESCO (Harber, 1997; UNESCO blue case *The Practice of Citizenship*, 1998) and the set of *Education for Development* tools produced by UNICEF provide useful references for programming in this area.

2. **Support processes that involve adolescents in critical thinking in the community.** In working with adolescents it is important to use a broad conception of the *political*, because some of the most influential processes in their lives have nothing to do with political parties or elections. The term *political* used in this sense implies *critical thinking*: analyzing how society is structured or organized, how decisions are made and in whose interests, and how the functioning of society affects different people differently.[41] The reference to adolescents doing media analysis (section 4.5 above) is one example of this. All aspects of society that affect adolescents, including the processes of their own socialization and interactions inside the 'privacy' of the home, are fruitful areas for examination. Because this type of critical thinking requires higher levels of cognitive skill and abstraction, it is more appropriate for older adolescents.

    Organizations in Latin America have the greatest experience of involving young people in this kind of political engagement. In Ecuador, the Programme of Working Children (PMT) reaches out to working adolescents through 'alternative spaces' in poor communities and engages them in a participatory process of reflection about their history, current situation and rights. The goal of these actions is to enable adolescents to see that they are citizens with the rights and capacities to influence their own futures. Importantly, the success of these efforts appears to depend on support from a large developing network of child rights defenders at the community level (families, schools, neighborhood organizations, churches and youthful volunteers), and government institutions and influential individuals at the municipal level (Hart, 1997:66-7). In Brazil, the process of drafting, debating and enacting a child statute has helped transform the thinking of young people, codified the key principles of the CRC, and stimulated the formation of youth participation through municipal councils. The statute has explicit provisions for the participation of communities, families and children themselves in key processes (Swift, 1997; Klees and Rizzini, 2000).

The extent to which these types of political engagement can be promoted in different parts of the world which lack a historical tradition of organizing is not clear, but worth exploring. The process of preparing State and alternate party reports for the Committee on the CRC may offer an initial and 'legitimate' means by which to foster this in other countries.

3. **Support the involvement of young people in local councils.** In recent years, adolescents have been accorded the opportunity to participate in 'mock' national councils or parliaments in different countries. These are usually one-off events that are initiated and run by sympathetic adults. While they generate significant media publicity, the resolutions made by young people are usually forgotten and there is little follow up or meaningful change after the high profile event. This can understandably engender frustration and cynicism in young people. In contrast, participation in local councils may afford a more sustainable and meaningful opportunity for young people, because they are closer to them and often handle matters to which adolescents can make valid contributions. In all cases the respectful support of adults as resource persons and guides is crucial to the practical functioning and legitimacy of these processes.

    The nature of councils (village, school, religious body) and the type of adolescent involvement in them (full membership, parallel set up, only consulted or with decision making power, autonomous or joint control over a particular domain) will vary, but all types of participation can be meaningful provided basic principles are respected. These types of involvement appear to be more common in Europe. Roger Hart elaborates on one interesting example of a youth council in France (also see Woollcombe, 1997). Here young councilors are elected by their peers once a year through schools, they meet monthly to discuss common concerns and decide on priorities, and in doing so they may summon adult 'resource persons' for specialist input. The priorities and resolutions of the youth council are communicated to the mayor, often in public hearings. Results attained include the promotion of bike paths, increased play spaces, involvement of youth in radio/TV management, and international solidarity actions with youth in developing countries. Evaluations done so far indicate that the process is generally very successful, but notes that young people from middle class backgrounds are over-represented in the council, though much less so than in the adult council (Hart, 1997:72-4). The scope for

replicating similar initiatives in other countries, especially where both school systems and local government functioning are weaker, remains a challenge.

4. **Promote carefully considered involvement of adolescents in electoral processes.** Elections can provide highly visible occasions for adolescent engagement. In post-conflict Mozambique, separate children's elections have helped teach adults about the workings of an electoral process; and in Mexico and Ecuador parallel children's votes at the same time as national elections have highlighted young people's 'priority rights' (Santos Pais, 1999a; UNICEF, 1997b). In Colombia, the 1996 Children's Mandate for Peace and Rights suggests that a child rights election can be a springboard to dramatic political change (Cameron, 2000b). These events have generated enormous enthusiasm and helped bring greater attention to the concerns and priorities of young people themselves. Nevertheless, their overall impact is not clear, and some of its features remain problematic. In Mexico, despite official clarification to the contrary, the rights which received the most votes were seen to have 'won' and others 'lost' (just like politicians!) and in Ecuador there appears to have been no follow up to the heartfelt resolutions of that election (ibid.).

While there is increased interest in youth involvement in electoral processes, significantly none of the young people consulted in the process of writing this paper raised it as a priority. Several adults stressed the need to proceed with extreme caution. Further evaluation is needed on the significance, over the medium to long term, of youth involvement in elections on both young people and society at large, as well as an assessment of the financial and human resource costs of such exercises. The ways in which young people's participation is structured, and in particular the ways in which election time voting is linked to both ongoing youth engagement and follow-up and accountability require close scrutiny. Significantly, also, none of these initiatives to date appear to raise the question, as Nelson Mandela once proposed, of lowering the voting age (to 14) or of other ways in which young people's participation can be directly linked with actual consequences. One potential move in this direction is to have all political parties issue concrete election manifestoes with clear benchmarks of how they will promote the interests of children and adolescents, and then track progress of the party in power. Overall, it might be worthwhile to organize a specific consultative exercise to challenge and dialogue with young people about the value and means of their effective engagement with electoral processes.

6. SETTING AND MONITORING GOALS FOR ADOLESCENT PARTICIPATION

Defining and measuring goals for adolescent participation represents an especially difficult challenge. The following considerations need to be taken into account:

1. Adolescent participation, as a right and end, is a goal in itself. Goals need to account for the quality and meaningfulness of participation, as well as equity in the adolescents participating.

2. Traditionally, goals for children and adolescents are often set in terms of reductions of certain illnesses. However, the developmental framework argues against the use of problem-based approaches to adolescents in favor of actions that strengthen assets or protective factors. While some of these are relatively easy to define and measure (completion of primary education, enrollment in secondary education) many others are not (level of democratic interaction in the school, improved coverage of youth in the media). Young people can play a key part in helping develop culturally sensitive indicators on aspects that are important to them.

3. The precise relationship between any *specific* investment in adolescent assets and a specific positive outcome is difficult to establish. The positive outcomes of such investments will also usually take a long time to manifest themselves. For these reasons it will be difficult to demonstrate how adolescent participation has contributed to a specific set of measurable positive outcomes, especially in the short to medium term.

4. Any definition of goals needs to account for the fact that adolescent participation is a desired end in itself (i.e. regardless of its positive effect on other outcomes). Therefore, goals need to reflect the composition, extent and quality of the participation *process*. However, "selling" these types of *developmental* goals will be a considerable challenge.

5. Current data collection systems are not well suited to account for adolescent participation. Information collected is not disaggregated along the adolescent age group, and it tends to focus on quantitative measures rather than qualitative measures that would better account for levels of participation.

6. In this context, indicators for adolescent participation will often need to be closest proxies.

A careful balance is needed between ensuring indicators are not too elusive so as to be practically unmeasurable and an over reliance on easily measurable indicators that fail to account for the extent and quality of the participation process.

7. In recent years, a number of ambitious goals have been set at international and UN conferences in Beijing, Cairo, Dakar and Istanbul. These goals can often provide helpful guidance and valuable legitimacy for adolescent participation. The setting of adolescent participation programme goals should relate to these goals where relevant.

With these considerations in mind, three types of goals/indicators can be developed:

- **Use and expansion of current/traditional measures:** these include goals such as increases in rates of primary education completion, secondary school enrollments and youth accessing health centers.

- **New goals that can be measured relatively easily:** these include goals such as elimination of corporal punishment in schools, increasing number of schools with student councils, increasing number of youth health/environment associations, and institutionalizing youth representation in local councils.

- **New goals that are difficult to measure:** these include goals such as the nature of interaction and learning at school, youth-friendliness of health services, levels of consultation in community decision-making processes, and quality of coverage of adolescents in the media. While these types of goals are probably not appropriate at the global level and do not allow for cross-context comparability, they can be used extremely meaningfully in local contexts and evaluated using qualitative methods. For these reasons they can be valuable and should not be 'discarded' for use by partners.

A grid structure of intervention settings (see annex 3) can be used to set goals and indicators at different levels, and can be particularly helpful for use in local contexts.

7. PRACTICAL NEXT STEPS

Taking the following steps will help provide international agencies and their partners at country level with the initial necessary tools and resources with which to promote adolescent participation. In addition to being published in print form, these resources should be posted on the internet to allow wide accessibility.

1. **Compile and disseminate the international consensus in favour of adolescent participation** as documented in the international processes of the last ten years (Beijing, Cairo, Rio, Dakar, etc.) and as reflected in the CRC, CEDAW and other international treaties. These documents make the case and provide valuable legitimacy for the involvement of adolescents. This process is already underway.[42]

2. **Identify, develop and disseminate detailed case studies of effective adolescent participation** in each of the seven entry points identified in this paper and other selected areas. The case studies should emphasize the key aspects of getting the initiative off the ground and sustaining its vitality in a manner that would be of practical use to someone else wanting to programme for adolescent participation. Important aspects to be covered include how did it start, who were the key players, what were the major obstacles, what were the essential supportive factors, what sort of leadership was necessary (for an example see Woollcombe, 1997 chapters 5 and 6). The case studies should be honest and balanced, not limited to uncritical "propaganda" pieces written by executors of the project. In order to reflect both sustainability and the strategic approach emphasized in this paper, case studies should highlight projects that emphasize participation in the day to day lives of adolescents at community level and that are operating well at least five years after their formation.

3. **Develop, in partnership with young people, a tool or set of tools to evaluate the quality, level and extent of adolescent participation** in different settings and contexts, such as schools, health services, youth associations and conferences. The programming grids (annexes 1-3) developed in this paper can be used as a basis for developing the tool.

4. **Develop, in partnership with young people, a simple guidebook on how to ensure effective participation of children and adolescents in conferences.** While conferences are often not the most meaningful vehicles for adolescent participation, their involvement in them is increasingly popular and visible, and young people's effective presence can make an important difference to the outcomes of meetings.[43] The guidebook should be designed to help conference organizers avoid the many problems that have emerged in recent meetings, and ensure that maximum space is created for participation in both the preparation and conference itself. A section of this guidebook should emphasize how young people themselves can take effective actions to ensure their own involvement.

5. **Develop, in partnership with young people, a simple guidebook on how youth associations can meaningfully involve young people in the democratic governance of their organizations** at different levels. The guidebook should address different types of youth associations, including ones run by young people themselves and those managed by adults but involved in youth promotion. The guidebook should be practical, and include interventions that are doable without the need for exceptionally gifted leadership. A section of this guidebook should emphasize how young people themselves can take effective actions to ensure their own involvement.

6. **Identify, create and maintain an active list of resource persons** who can assist in the development of programmes for adolescent participation. Resource persons should include staff of partner organizations, other key resource persons and young people themselves. As much as possible this list should identify resource persons at country and regional levels. Information collected should include the resource person's experience, publications and field of expertise, and be done in a standard format so as to allow user-friendly access and consistency of information.

7. **Compile and disseminate an annotated bibliography of the 15-25 key materials** on adolescent participation, and information on how these could be acquired, to partner staff. Given the difficulties of acquiring materials in many countries, it might be worthwhile to purchase a few selected materials (an essential resources kit) that can be sent to country offices upon request.

8. **Consider instituting a simple, uniform and systematic format in which partner organizations can collect and analyze information about child and youth participation in their programmes** as part of their annual reporting process. Further areas of integration include the country situation analysis and mid-term review. Measures should allow for meaningful comparability of results across country programmes. Information should also account for the level and quality of participation, at least to a limited degree.

9. **Assess the interest and capacity of partner country offices to programme for adolescent development,** at least in selected countries. In part, this could include a simple self-administered training needs-assessment of both staff and partners, and the subsequent development of a training strategy. However, training should only be envisaged after ascertaining that other key supports to move forward are in place so as to avoid training that does not have a realistic possibility of being put to use.

10. **Explore the potential and value of creating youth advisory boards to partners** at both country and global levels. The purpose of these boards would be to institutionalize a mechanism for young people's input to partners' overall work

at a high level, and to facilitate a manner through which partners would 'report' on the progress it has made in promoting the meaningful participation of children and young people. It is critical that these boards only be created if they will be regarded as central and valued elements of partners' decision making processes. They would only work "if there were committed adults who are willing to listen and respond genuinely" (Bull, interview) and if the organization was willing to seriously engage young people in governance. A wide range of important questions need to be carefully considered: the roles and responsibilities of the boards, the precise extents and limits of their powers, the level and format of information that would be made available to them, the composition and selection of the boards, how they would be linked and accountable to their constituencies, the type of training and support such boards would require to function effectively, and the human/financial resource implications of this endeavor for partners. In determining these issues partners can draw upon the experience of UNICEF Belize,[44] as well as the experience IPPF and the Mentor Foundation that have established boards at the global level and youth organizations at national level. Initially, this innovation should probably be implemented and closely monitored in selected number of country programmes for a period of 2-3 years before any plans are made for wider implementation.

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Annexes

NOTES ON HOW TO USE TOOLS IN ANNEXES 1-4

ANNEX 1

Analysis/Assessment: What is the present situation of adolescent participation?

First, identify the key entry points for intervention in your specific context. The grid in annex 1 includes entry points covered in this paper, but yours will be different in accordance to your context. Next, assess the nature and possibility of adolescent participation against the *developmental keys (capability, opportunity, supportive environment)* by asking the following questions, *for each entry point*:

a) what capabilities do adolescents have for effective participation?
b) what sorts of opportunities do adolescents have for meaningful participation?
c) to what extent and in what ways is the environment safe/supportive of adolescent participation?
d) for a-c above, do an "equity check": are the capabilities, opportunities and environments for participation equitably distributed or are some discriminated against more than others?

Planning/Programming: What can be done to promote effective adolescent participation?

Similarly to above, after selecting entry points, *for entry point*, ask:

a) what actions can strengthen the capabilities of adolescents to participate effectively?
b) what actions can expand and make available meaningful opportunities for adolescent participation?
c) what actions can create safe and supportive environments for adolescent participation?

d) for a-c above, what actions are taken to both ensure programmes do not discriminate against any adolescents and what specific measures are put in place to support adolescents who tend to be discriminated against?

ANNEX 2

Similar to annex 1, this grid can be used for both assessment and planning. However, instead of different entry points it focuses on different *potential interventions* in one entry point- school. Again, the interventions reflected in the grid are the ones used in this paper, but they need not be the same as the interventions you use, which will depend in part on your own specific context. The same set of questions a-d are also asked in this grid, but this time in relation to each intervention.

ANNEX 3

This grid is a tool to set goals and indicators for each one of the key interventions within each selected entry point. These need to reflect both the types of outcomes desired as well as who and how many are going to participate (equity check).

ANNEX 4

This checklist provides a quick way in which to check the level and quality of participation, reflecting the principles outlined in this paper.

ANNEX 1
A TOOL FOR ASSESSING/PROMOTING EFFECTIVE ADOLESCENT PARTICIPATION (DEVELOPMENTAL KEYS)

Developmental keys	family / household	schools	health services	community development/ environment	youth associations	media	political processes	(other)
a) capabilities								
b) opportunities								
c) safe and supportive environments								
d) who participates? (equity check)								
notes								

Note: For elaboration on column headings, see section 5 of the paper

ANNEX 2
A TOOL FOR ASSESSING/PROMOTING EFFECTIVE ADOLESCENT PARTICIPATION (DEVELOPMENTAL KEYS) IN SCHOOLS

Developmental Keys	curriculum pedagogy/ interaction	life skills content/ practice	fair/ transparent discipline	democratic interaction & governance	teacher training & support	outreach to out of school youth	greater investment
a) capabilities							
b) opportunities							
c) safe and supportive environments							
d) who participates? (equity check)							
notes							

Note: For elaboration on column headings, see section 5.1 of the paper

ANNEX 3
A TOOL FOR DEFINING GOALS AND INDICATORS FOR ADOLESCENT PARTICIPATION INTERVENTIONS

Goals and indicators	schools	health services	community development/ environment	youth associations	media	political processes
Priority interventions	quality learning & interaction life skills content/practice discipline -> learning, fair, transparent democratic interaction & governance teachers supported outreach to OSY investment in edu. access to secondary edu	developmental approach promoted youth-friendly services community based health activities youth health associations	youth-friendly communities adolescents in community development adolescents in decision making adolescents have viable livelihoods	situation & potential map youth assoc. capability strengthened new youth associations formed youth participate in key processes	increased coverage of youth youth voices in media adolescents doing media analysis	participatory citizen education opportunities for critical reflection youth in local councils youth elections
Programme Goals						
Indicators						
Who participates? (equity check)						
Notes						

ANNEX 4   REAL ADOLESCENT PARTICIPATION CHECKLIST
Rakesh R. Rajani, February 2000

What is REAL participation?	What is FALSE participation?
Is it voluntary? Real participation is something a young person should want to do.	If adolescents are made to demonstrate against their will, or forcibly "volunteered" into committees.
Is it equitable? Real participation is inclusive; it does not discriminate on the basis of sex, wealth, rural/urban location, ethnicity, disability, etc.	If activities are only practically accessible to rich or urban adolescents, or only boys are asked questions, or only the smart ones are selected for meetings.
Is it valued? Real participation requires all participants, including adolescents, to be valued, listened to and taken seriously.	If adolescents are present, but get little chance to participate. When they do, people don't listen carefully or take adolescents' views into account.
Is it respectful? Real participation means addressing each other with respect and care, not derision or paternalism.	If the chair of the meeting ignores the adolescents or speaks to them in a way that shows he does not value their presence or what they have to say.
What's the point of it? Real participation requires young people to see the value of doing the exercise.	If adolescents are simply told what to do, they don't really know or understanding why they are doing it
Does it matter? Real participation happens when the area or issue is important or of interest to young people.	If adolescents are made to participate in something that they don't care much about and feels like a waste of their time.
Does it make a difference? Real participation means young people's contributions have an influence and make a difference.	If adolescents are asked for contributions that make no difference whatsoever in influencing thinking or changing conditions.
Are the physical arrangements fair and conducive? How the seating is arranged makes a big difference.	If the adults sit in chairs while adolescents are on the floor, the room's periphery or under the hot sun.
Is it done in a language that adolescents understand well? Real participation requires adolescents to feel competent and comfortable in the medium of communication.	If discussions are held in English in a rural district, or the manner is very formal and full of "big words".
Are the rules fair for all? Real participation is done in a manner in which everyone can participate equally and comfortably, and often involves adolescents in making the rules.	If some adults dominate, while adolescents don't get a chance or are cut off too early. People are made to contribute in ways they do not know or like.
Are the child participants adequately informed and prepared? Real participation means adolescents have had enough time, opportunity and support to prepare.	If adults have experience and information whereas the adolescents are just pulled in with little sense of what is happening and time to prepare.
Are the allowable roles fair? Real participation assigns roles and responsibilities fairly, and allows everyone to play a role they are capable of whenever possible.	If teachers make all the decisions and rules while adolescents just answer questions, or only adolescents are made to park bicycles and serve tea.
What's the level? Real participation goes beyond show and allows young people to initiate ideas, make decisions and take actions to the maximum extent of their capability. (see R. Hart's ladder for a tool)	If adolescents are told to participate in certain ways without having a say in the content or method of participation, or adolescents are only consulted when they are also capable of responsible decision making.

	Is it honest? Real participation respects ethics, avoids manipulation and is clear in its purposes and methods.	If adolescents are not told the truth or deliberately left in the dark about what is happening.
	Is it safe? Real participation takes all necessary steps to ensure no participant is endangered.	If confidentiality is not maintained where appropriate, such as when the adolescent who tells the truth about something is punished.
	What happens afterwards? Real participation is clear and transparent about how the output of the participation will be taken forward, and how it connects with other processes. It often aims to mainstream participation for sustainability.	If adolescents participate actively on something important but it is not clear what follow-up will take place or what will be done with their contribution. Session report is not shared checked with adolescents.
	(add yours)	

Grace Banya and Jan Olav Baaroy provided useful comments on the checklis

Endnotes

[1] Examples of good practice are drawn from a variety of sources. Unfortunately, many of these accounts are descriptive and often lack a critical perspective, and reflect the general lack of published information on rigorous evaluations of adolescent participation projects. For this reason, examples of various initiatives cited in this paper should be treated with caution.

[2] This does not mean that one need not worry about any attention to specific adolescent problems and programmes dealing with matters such as HIV/STI education and counseling, contraceptive services, job training and tolerance training. Services and programmes that respond to specific sets of problems are extremely important. The point is that these programmes should be based on an approach that recognizes and builds upon a developmental approach.

[3] Here capability means having the information, skills, abilities, confidence and understanding to participate according to one's choosing; opportunity is the means to be able to both actualize capabilities and to further strengthen them, through access and useful connections with organizations, services, associations, systems and other resources; and safe/supportive environments mean the people, structures and processes around the adolescent – from the domestic to global levels – that are encouraging, facilitative and enabling of adolescent participation.

The reviews also emphasize four other aspects that have been critical in successful interventions with young people:

- continuity is key -- one shots, and interventions that do a little bit here and there, are not effective

- comprehensive programmes addressing underlying factors behind multiple concerns may have more impact and be most cost efficient compared to a fragmented problem-based approach

- strengthening key institutions around the adolescent, rather than trying to reach young people directly, will be more effective and allow for greater sustainability

- joint action is needed by all, especially by the pivotal institutions of family, schools and communities, and young people themselves

[4] This represents a selection of comments of young people received by email in September 1999. UNICEF programme staff facilitated this process.

[5] For example, A major review of adolescent girls in the developing world states that "expanding girls' economic options should be a priority" (Mensch, et al, 1998:82). Another survey of youth organizations in Africa found that 40% of the respondents regarded unemployment and access to resources as the most important priority for adolescent well-being (International Center for research on Women - ICRW, in ibid.).

[6] A case in point is the recent widespread promotion of decentralized user fees for health and education services, which appear to further burden many poor communities, including young people, with the task of making up for State failure in these areas. See also point 7 in section 5.1.

[7] In certain difficult circumstances, the key institutions and geographical settings in the lives of adolescents are greatly disrupted and weakened. In such situations, programmes will often need to employ special stop-gap measures and put special emphasis in strengthening institutions and supporting new ones (such as child headed households or refugee camp youth councils). See also section 3.6.

[8] Hart adds this note regarding levels of participation: "The ladder of children's participation: while the upper levels of the ladder express increasing degrees of initiation by children, they are not meant to imply that a child should always be attempting to operate at the highest level of their competence. The figure is rather meant for adult facilitators to establish the conditions that enable groups of children to work at whatever levels they choose. A child may elect to work at different levels on different projects or during different phases of the same project. Also, some children may not be initiators but are excellent collaborators. The important principle is to avoid working at the three lowest levels, the rungs of non-participation".

[9] For another illuminating list of lessons about requirements for meaningful participation of young people see Woollcombe's "twelve principles" (section 5.2, 1997).

[10] These points are summarized from a focus group discussion with teenage members of several youth organizations in New York City. The discussion was held at UNICEF headquarters in September 1999.

[11] A good example of this is the recent pre- and post-meeting sessions with young people in connection to the Oslo and Braga conferences and the UNICEF Leo House/Pawling consultation. Young people reported feeling that the pre-sessions helped clarify the purpose of their participation, build confidence/leadership, establish a support mechanism among themselves, learn strategic lobbying skills and how to work the media, and share ideas about how to continue their work upon return to their home countries (UNICEF, 1998d:5).

[12] For an insightful commentary on how adolescent participation in a recent high level meeting on child rights was constrained despite good intentions of generally progressive and sympathetic adults, see UNICEF Regional Office for Europe (1999).

[13] The question of whether or not to provide cash or other incentives to encourage adolescent participation in programme activities is contentious. Some say that incentives "poison" the voluntary and intrinsic spirit of participation, while others argue that incentives are practical, meet real needs and recognize the value of their labor. There appears to be no hard rule about this, the answer is that it varies and it depends on context (UNICEF, undated, section 6.3.4). Whichever the case may be, it is important to consult widely (including with adolescents) on the issue and to ensure some consistency among development partners.

[14] See UNICEF (1999i) for a detailed account of how the debt repayment arrangements of the world's poorest countries need to be reorganized to benefit improved social services.

[15] There have been some important precedents in this regard in recent years, including the Bank's interest in early childhood development and its "Global partnership for youth development". See www.bpdweb.org/gpyd for more information.

[16] For a discussion on how to stimulate public dialogue and participation on child rights see Rajani, R and Petren, A (2000).

[17] This does not mean that entry points not emphasized here are not important. The "home/household" is probably the most important setting, but is not included here due to the difficulty of programming in this fundamentally "private" sphere. Other important settings not included that may be priorities in some countries include religious institutions, workplaces and juvenile justice. The framework presented in this paper allows for key entry points to be determined in each context.

[18] The London based organization End Punishment of Children Worldwide (EPOCH) and its international network of partners is a particularly useful resource for understanding why physical punishment is deeply detrimental to child well-being and what can be done about it.

[19] "It is through proximal authority figures that children learn to accept more distal authority … thus the way teachers interpret their authority and structure classroom interactions sends a message about authority membership, and obligations to the broader society" (Flanagan and Gill, 1999:14).

[20] The new South African Constitution requires every school to have a learner's council, which represents an extremely progressive manifestation of mainstreaming opportunity for democratic participation. For an insightful comparative study of the value of student councils in Tanzania, see Harber and Davies (1997:156-8). Benefits cited include enabling problems to be solved before they get out of hand, students being consulted in the piloting or formation of new policies, improved and easier discipline, reduced workload for teachers, and improved leadership skills among students. Importantly, all sides – students, teachers and management – were seen to benefit.

[21] In Tanzania, for instance, some trainee teachers have their nails inspected by their tutors (Richard Mabala, personal communication, August 1999).

[22] This does not imply that schools are the only or best contexts for *all* adolescents, for learning can also take place outside schools. However, few other institutions match the potential for programming to scale.

[23] Evidence from Tanzania indicates that the introduction of user fees and mandatory "contributions" (*michango*) has a significantly negative impact on school enrollment and attendance, and that students are beaten for their parents' inability to pay (Rajani and Robinson, 1999).

[24] For a discussion of how new youth-adult alliances for effective HIV/AIDS programmes see Ledward and Rajani (1999).

[25] For a fuller, practical account of youth-friendly services see UNICEF, 1997c:41-48

[26] Models that are "too excellent" – well-resourced and dependent upon well-paid staff – can be ineffective because their youth-friendly practice can be easily dismissed as only possible in exceptional circumstances.

[27] One study in Bangladesh showed that girls who were involved in monitoring their growth achieved an enhanced understanding of the relationship between nutrition and growth as compared to their peers who had been exposed to standard health education techniques (WHO, 1999:44).

[28] For a helpful summary of school health programmes see UNICEF, 1997c:31-38

[29] Hart (1997) is a rich resource for the many ways in which young people can be meaningfully involved in environmental care.

[30] Research with children needs to be done in an ethical manner at all times, and especially during times of conflict. For a succinct, lucid article on this see Boyden, 2000.

[31] For a UK based account of child and adolescent involvement in community planning see Freeman, Henderson and Kettle (1999). See also section 5.6 in this paper.

[32] Adolescent girls' ability to move beyond home and family-defined identity has profound implications for their development. Girls' autonomy and skill levels are substantially limited if they are not at liberty to leave home to visit friends, or institutions outside the family; participate in female solidarity groups; and identify themselves publicly as students, workers, and citizens" (Mensch, et al, 1998:19-20).

[33] There are at least three main types of youth associations. One set of these are associations *for* young people, which are run by adults and are committed to working on youth issues and/or involving young people in their activities. Examples include many child-youth rights organizations, street children programmes, national networks for youth, youth foundations and global bodies. Another set includes associations *of* young people, which may be initiated by adults or adolescents, but whose membership is primarily made up of young people and whose affairs are largely managed by (usually) youth. These include student councils, issue focused clubs, sports teams, informal business groups and national youth organizations. The third set involves a youth-adult partnership. In reality organizations are not as distinct as these three types, and often involve a combination of their features.

[34] See how SERVOL, a national NGO in Trinidad and Tobago, is a good example of support for the development of management skills of young people (WHO, 1999:139-41).

[35] The experience of the International Youth Foundation's country partners may be useful in this regard. For more information see www.iyfnet.org

[36] The 'Governing Council' is the highest decision making body at IPPF. Of its five members from each of IPPF's six regions, one must be a young person aged under 25 years (i.e. six out of 30 members must be a young person). All members have an equal vote. A youth working group is looking at how to ensure this structure is "more democratic, representative and accountable" (email communication with Jessica and Kathryn Faulkner, October 2000)

[37] See UNICEF, 1997c:57-64 for other examples.

[38] For other excellent examples of youth in media see UNAIDS and UNICEF, 1998; and Hart, 1997:182-191.

[39] While youth of all ages can take part meaningfully, the type and level of analysis will obviously vary significantly across the adolescence life span.

[40] For an elaborate discussion of this entry point see the collection of papers in Rajani, 2000

[41] "politics implies both the regulation as well as the contestation of social life" (Kum Kum Bhavnani, in Flanagan and Gallay, 1995:35). The work of Paulo Freire, which has been particularly influential in Latin America, also involves this broad conception of the political (*conscientization*) and has been effective in showing how the poor, young and illiterate can do effective analysis.

[42] A compilation of youth rights recognized in several international forums has already been produced. See Commonwealth Youth Programme, 1997 for a guide produced for young people. For a brief look at what the UN agencies do in relation young people's participation see UN Youth Unit (1997).

[43] There is considerable recent experience of youth involvement in conferences that can provide useful information for this guidebook. Both young people and adults involved as facilitators of these processes can serve as valuable resources.

[44] The UNICEF Belize 1998 Annual Report refers to the successful establishment in 1997 of a "children's advisory committee" to advise UNICEF work in the country. The committee consists of five boys and five girls, and draws half its members from "disadvantaged" groups of society. It meets once a month to discuss programme initiatives and help plan actions, and was also involved in the annual review. One of its key reported achievements is to have placed child rights issues squarely on the agenda in the last national political elections. It is not clear whether an independent evaluation of the committee has been undertaken, but closer study of this initiative may be instructive.